

ACTS

CRAIG S. KEENER



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A C T S

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Dedicated to my recent and current fellow Acts commentators (Loveday Alexander, Carl Holladay, Eckhard Schnabel, Steve Walton, et al.), including the memory of Richard Pervo, always a gracious and respectful dialogue partner despite his differences from many of the rest of us.

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Acknowledgments and Explanatory Preface



With the publishers' kind permission, this commentary mostly condenses (by roughly 91 percent) my larger, 4,500-page commentary on Acts, published by Baker Academic in 2012–15. I am grateful to both Baker and Cambridge for making this shorter and slightly updated version available. Thanks in this volume to my editors Ben Witherington and Beatrice Rehl, to Judith Odor for the index, and to Vinithan Sethumadhavan, Penny Harper, and the rest of Cambridge's team.

The larger, original commentary cites some 45,000 extrabiblical ancient references and more than 10,000 secondary sources. Needless to say, this present commentary, while more accessible and more portable, must omit most discussions, surveys of views, alternate positions, major outlines, and the vast majority of documentation found there. (Here I have also taken the liberty of eliminating translators and some subtitles and series references to preserve space.) Least of all can I afford space to address frequent scholarly arguments from silence based on what Luke omits. Thus readers, reviewers, and dissertation writers needing further documentation, explanation, or details should turn instead to my fuller work, the final volume of which precedes the writing of this one by just four years.

Instead of dividing Acts into its major sections, which would create excessively large and unwieldy blocks, I have chosen to break many narratives into smaller units, simply introducing the larger sections in those units where they begin. My Galatians commentary in this series is 332 pages for six chapters, but Acts is twenty-eight chapters. Especially after the first two chapters of Acts, therefore, some units will receive brief comment, simply for lack of space.

Like other commentaries in the series, this volume is geared to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) text, and therefore includes comments

explaining Greek wordplays that translations such as the NRSV sometimes obscure. To stay within this volume's assigned word count, however, at the final stage we reluctantly omitted the translation itself (10 percent of this volume's original length), to which most readers have ready access.

I Introduction



This introduction explores what it means for Acts to be an ancient historical monograph, as well as its proposed date, authorship, audience, purposes, message, and narrative continuity with Luke's Gospel.

PROPOSED GENRES FOR ACTS

Genre provides the culturally conditioned, conventional expectations shared by authors and ideal audiences concerning how to interpret a particular sort of work. Acts is self-evidently narrative, and therefore a variety of narrative genres, from ancient novels to histories, shed some light on its literary characteristics. Nevertheless, it comes closer to some narrative genres than others. Ancient readers were aware of various categories of genre. They recognized major distinctions between genres that built on (insofar as possible) factual information, especially history, and those that addressed fictitious subjects, especially in epic poetry.¹

A very small number of scholars have argued that Acts is a prose epic. Since all major epics were poetic, however, the genre of prose epic did not exist. More often, some scholars have compared Acts with a novel.² Because ancient histories and novels often shared literary techniques, and Acts is a more popular-level work, the comparison offers some fruitful insights. Nevertheless, most scholars doubt that Acts is properly speaking a novel. The majority of ancient novels were romances, a feature notoriously lacking in Acts. Novels were also usually about fictitious characters, in clear contrast to Acts (as comparison with Paul's letter fully demonstrates).

¹ Besides Keener, *Acts*, 1:51–165, esp. 85–86, 119, 133, see also my *Christobiography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 157, 205–6.

² See esp. Pervo, *Profit*.

A small minority of ancient novels, extraordinarily small compared to actual ancient biographies and histories, are novels about *historical* characters. These exploit and subvert biographic and historiographic conventions, but they rarely show signs of interest in genuine research into the times depicted. This is quite a far cry from Acts, which (as illustrated below) overlaps considerably with historical information, sometimes even fairly obscure historical information, that can now be documented from other sources.

The heyday of novels was the late second and early third century, from which most of the “apocryphal acts” and gospels hail. These works depend on earlier Gospels and Acts, but it would be anachronistic to read influence into the other direction. The literary features of Acts sometimes paralleled in novels, such as riots, also feature in many historical works. Indeed, Paul’s letters make clear that Luke has offered only a small sample of Paul’s actual adventures (2 Cor 11:23–33).³ Like novels, Luke-Acts has literary unity, but this also characterizes many biographies and historical monographs on particular subjects.

Because the first volume of Luke-Acts, Luke’s Gospel, is usually (and probably properly) deemed a *bios*, a life or ancient biography, of Jesus, scholars such as Charles Talbert have compared Acts with biographies, especially biographic succession narratives.⁴ This proposal has much to commend it, since Acts focuses on primary characters, especially Peter and Paul (with lesser roles for Stephen, Philip, and a few colleagues). In the first century, biography and historiography overlapped considerably, so that even historians focused on stories of leading figures. Ancient writers sometimes composed parallel biographies of two comparable figures, the second in some respects resembling the first; certainly the Jerusalem church apostles (exemplified in Peter) and the gentile mission apostles (exemplified by Paul) repeat many of Jesus’ works in the second volume.

Nevertheless, Acts includes multiple figures and most scholars find it closer to a historical monograph. Ancient multivolume histories could contain a volume focused on a particular figure that, if freestanding, would be a biography, but as part of the whole constituted a biographic volume in a multivolume history. (Note, for example, the focus on Alexander of

³ Good historians had to choose what to omit or treat briefly and what to develop (Lucian, *Hist.* 6).

⁴ For Acts as collected biography, see now helpfully esp. Adams, *Genre*, 116–71.

Macedon in Bk. 17 of Diodorus Siculus's history.) Luke's Acts, then, may be a biographic history and his Gospel a historically oriented biography.

ACTS AS HISTORICAL MONOGRAPH

By far the dominant view of Acts' genre today, earlier argued by prominent Lukan scholars such as Martin Dibelius and Henry Cadbury,⁵ is that Acts is a work of ancient historiography. A number of factors support this thesis, including Luke's use of speeches and the preface to his first volume. Luke's use of sources in his first volume (including Mark and probably what many scholars call "Q") fits historical interest that we would also expect to carry over into the second volume.

Luke's preface (Luke 1:1–4) identifies a historical subject: "*the events that have been fulfilled among us*" (1:1).⁶ The preface bears some similarities to prefaces of scientific treatises, suggesting that Luke writes more on the fact-based, scientific side of ancient historiography than on the more rhetorical side.⁷

Acts is clearly not an elite multivolume universal history; it is a historical monograph about a narrower topic (comparable to historical monographs by, say, Sallust). Scholars divide over the narrower historical topic, such as "ethnographic" or "political" history, and approach, such as "biographic" or "dramatic"; Luke may reflect a range of such features. His apologetic interest, at least, compares with interests and agendas also evident in ancient apologetic historiography, frequent in ethnographic historiography that defends minority peoples.⁸

Although some scholars find echoes of Polybius and Thucydides in Luke's work, his most obvious literary model, often directly cited in the early chapters of Acts, is the Greek version of the Old Testament, which contains much historiography. Nevertheless, Josephus and fragments of other hellenistic Jewish historians reveal the extent to which Greek historiographic principles shaped retellings of biblical history. Thus it

⁵ Dibelius, *Studies*, 123–37; Cadbury, *Acts in History*, passim.

⁶ With, e.g., Callan, "Preface"; D. P. Moessner, "Dionysius's Narrative 'Arrangement' (οἰκονομία) as the Hermeneutical Key to Luke's Re-vision of the 'Many,'" pages 149–64 in *Paul, Luke, and the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. A. Christophersen et al.; JSNTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002; London: T&T Clark, 2003).

⁷ Alexander, *Context*, 12–13, 41–42; cf. discussion on *akribôs* in Luke 1:3 in E.-M. Becker, *The Birth of Christian History: Memory and Time from Mark to Luke-Acts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 103–4.

⁸ See Sterling, *Historiography*.

makes good sense that Luke, writing from and for Diaspora Christians, would have similar tendencies, even if, as is likely, he had not read the elite historians that provided models for some of the Jewish historians better known in his era.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ACTS TO BE ANCIENT HISTORIOGRAPHY?

Modern historiography evolved from its ancient namesake, but there are distinctions. Certainly no amount of respect for Luke's achievement should lead us to suppose that he conformed his work to the expectations of a genre that did not yet exist in his day. Ancient historians were very conscious of their narrative format and committed to the literary character of their art; where details they thought necessary for a cohesive narrative were lacking, they thus sometimes supplied them, based on their likeliest inferences.

Ancient audiences allowed historians a range of flexibility on details, but would not expect historians to invent major events (such as Paul's abuse in Philippi or, I believe, Lydia's conversion there), and certainly not major, pivotal matters like Paul's Roman custody in Judea and transfer to Rome (which also appears in detailed "we" material, the material where the narrator implies his presence with "we").

History and Rhetoric

Historians used conventional rhetorical principles to produce cohesive and inviting narratives. Although Luke is not as sophisticated in rhetoric as many elite historians were, he employs some conventional features of historical rhetoric.

Some late twentieth-century debates as to whether to approach Luke-Acts historically or from a narrative-theological perspective reflect a false dichotomy. Ancient historians were not mere chroniclers, but narrative *writers*. Thus they used rhetorical techniques to make their histories persuasive; they deemed compatible a factual core and its narrativized presentation.⁹ One rhetorical handbook, probably from the first century,

⁹ See Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 65–66; S. Byrskog, *Story as History, History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 213, 223.

teaches students early in their training how to abridge or amplify accounts by providing fuller description, paraphrase, or explanation.¹⁰ Although such adaptation did not require changing the basic gist,¹¹ some historians did flesh out scenes,¹² conversations,¹³ thoughts¹⁴ and (much more regularly) speeches.¹⁵ But other historians quickly complained if their peers went too far.¹⁶

We may take Josephus as one example, although he seems to take more liberties than many historians of his era. Josephus is often careless,¹⁷ and often had to depend on others' errant guesses for population estimates and distances and he composed speeches freely (including the same speech differently in different works). Nevertheless, archaeology more often than not confirms even many minor details in his topographic descriptions.¹⁸

The degree to which he adapts biblical accounts varies from one narrative to another, but he usually keeps close to the basic substance of the biblical story. He retells the same event in different ways in different books; yet this practice suggests not that the event never happened, but that he presents it from a different perspective. Like some of his contemporaries,

¹⁰ Theon, *Progymn.* 4.37–42, 80–82 Butts, on fables; later, cf. Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 3 (Chreia), 7.

¹¹ Theon, *Progymn.* 3.224–40; cf. 2.115–23; also Longinus, *Sublime* 11.1; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 2.7.120–21.

¹² Polybius complains about this (2.56.7, 10–11; 3.38.3; 15.34.1).

¹³ E.g., 1 Macc 6:10–13; 2 Macc 3:37–39; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.38–45, 53–58, 78–83; for Tacitus, see M. Hadas, “Introduction,” pages ix–xxiii in *The Complete Works of Tacitus* (ed. M. Hadas; trans. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb; New York: Random House, 1942), xx–xxi; for biographers, T. Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3; for Plutarch specifically, see M. De Pourcq and G. Roskam, “Mirroring Virtues in Plutarch’s Lives of Agis, Cleomenes and the Gracchi,” pages 163–80 in *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome: Narrative Technique and Fictionalization* (ed. Koen De Temmerman and Kristoffel Demoen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 167, noting on 178 that this practice in biography was little different from ancient historiography.

¹⁴ E.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.74; *Ann.* 4.38, 39; 12.4; cf. Arrian, *Alex.* 7.1.4.

¹⁵ See Keener, *Acts*, 1:258–82; A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 94–95; M. R. Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 11.

¹⁶ C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 134–36.

¹⁷ Contrast, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.252 (the fuller account) with *War* 2.183.

¹⁸ See, e.g., T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984); D. Syon, “Gamla: Portrait of a Rebellion,” *BAR* 18 (1, 1992): 20–37, 72.

Josephus seems to have viewed his “translation” task as including interpretation and adaptation for his audience.¹⁹

Luke obviously does not go to the extremes of the most lavishly rhetorical historians: he never provides elaborative descriptions of sites or artwork as in many historians;²⁰ his set speeches remain summaries rather than extensive reconstructions.

Modern historians may try to press behind hard data to infer likely reasons for various outcomes; ancient historians often did the same, but unlike modern historians sometimes wrote their inferences into the narrative itself. (This difference becomes especially acute in reports of speeches, as noted further below.) Whereas modern academic historians often cite their sources, ancient historians often cited them only when reports about events diverged significantly, a problem arising much less frequently when writing about recent or contemporary history.

Given such differences, it is no surprise that Luke’s reports appear most vulnerable to modern critique with respect to Quirinius’s census (Luke 2:2) and the date of Theudas in Gamaliel’s speech (Acts 5:36–37). The former report involves a putative incident a full generation before the bulk of Luke’s material, and the latter a speech to which none of the apostles claim to be privy.

In general, however, and by the usual standards of ancient historiography, Luke’s treatment of history fares quite well: he normally writes “contemporary history,” that is, about recent events, and external sources regularly confirm most of his information that can be tested. More recent history was considered more verifiable than the distant past,²¹ and especially the earliest, mythical period.²² Sources closer to the events were also recognized as more apt to be accurate.

Occasional minor variation on details (e.g., Acts 17:14–16; 1 Thess 3:1–2) suggests the independence of the sources that corroborate Luke’s more basic claims, and such minor variations would have disturbed neither ancient historians in general (among whom they were pervasive) nor Luke

¹⁹ S. Inowlocki, “‘Neither Adding Nor Omitting Anything’: Josephus’ Promise Not to Modify the Scriptures in Greek and Latin Context,” *JJS* 56 (1, 2005): 48–65.

²⁰ Contrast, e.g., Fronto, *Ad Ant. Imp.* 2.6.4–15.

²¹ E.g., Thucydides 1.21.1; Livy 6.1.2–3; 7.6.6; Diodorus Siculus 1.6.2; 1.9.2; 4.1.1; 4.8.3–5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.12.3; *Thuc.* 5; Pausanias 9.31.7; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.15, 24–25, 58.

²² E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 5–7; Plutarch, *Thes.* 1.1–3; Justin, *Epit.* 2.6.7; 11.3.11.

in particular. Luke allows for variation even in his own presentation. (Compare for example Luke 23:50–53 with Acts 13:28–29; Luke 24:40–51 with Acts 1:3–9;²³ Acts 10:3–6 with 10:30–32; or Acts 9:5–6 with 22:8, 10; 9:15–16 and 22:10 with 26:16–18; 10:5–6 with 11:13–14.) For ancient historiography, getting the story right meant getting its gist; since sources are always incomplete and might already include inferences anyway, writers might try to harmonize their sources. Apart from external polemic and responding apologetic, however, most did not find minor variations a matter of concern.

Ancient historians saw their basis as factual and generally disclaimed bias (even though their biases are often evident to other observers). Even those who accused others of extensive embellishment rarely accused them of inventing events (battles, deaths, and so forth).

History and Moral Lessons

Mainstream ancient historians did not compose mere chronicles to display antiquarian knowledge. Those who wanted a broad audience expected their accounts of the past to be useful sources for speeches and moral instruction. Even more concretely than invented stories (which speakers also used), accounts from the remembered past provided potential lessons and models. The Roman emphasis on honor also contributed to a greater valuing of memory, honoring positive models from the past and shaming negative ones, as an incentive for subsequent generations' honorable behavior.²⁴

Although historians today naturally find unappealing extreme postmodern nihilism about historical knowledge, most recognize greater value in the postmodern critique of modernism's self-assured "objectivity." Different modern biographies of Churchill or Lincoln will display different perspectives,²⁵ and ancient historians were no less subject to varying perspectives than we.²⁶ They were, in fact, sometimes more

²³ Unless Acts' forty days are postascension as in H. J. de Jonge, "The Chronology of the Ascension Stories in Luke and Acts," *NTS* 59 (2, 2013): 151–71.

²⁴ See, e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 5.8.1–2.

²⁵ Writers today also use history for sociopolitical purposes; see, e.g., J. Rüpke, *Religion: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50.

²⁶ Cf., e.g., J. D. Chaplin, "Conversations in History: Arrian and Herodotus, Parmenio and Alexander," *GRBS* 51 (4, 2011): 613–33; J. Beneker, "The Crossing of the Rubicon and the Outbreak of Civil War in Cicero, Lucan, Plutarch, and Suetonius," *Phoenix* 65 (1–2, 2011): 74–99; J. A. Kelhoffer, "The Maccabees at Prayer: Pro- and Anti-Hasmonean

straightforward about stating theirs (except when framing it negatively as bias, an accusation they more often leveled against their competitors).

Although the historical ideal was objectivity, ancient historians often had national or ethnic biases clearer to us than they were to them. Roman historians might respect powerful figures from other peoples, such as Alexander or Hannibal, but they often viewed the Roman Empire as a force for good (though many also viewed it as a moral decline from the glorious republic). Herodotus respected other peoples, but Greek historians inevitably wrote from a Greek-centered perspective, provoking alternative historiographies from Egyptians, Jews, and other colonized peoples. Mainstream historians often wrote to inculcate “good citizenship”;²⁷ one frequent agenda was the value of the state and honoring those so patriotic as to die for it.

The emphasis on patriotism, however, is part of a wider emphasis on moral lessons as a whole. For example:

- Polybius (second century BCE) begins his multivolume history by observing its utilitarian value: people “have no more ready corrective of conduct than knowledge of the past.”²⁸
- Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BCE)
 - felt that historians should choose a noble subject, so their work would contribute to good moral character as well as providing information;²⁹
 - includes among major purposes for writing history: that the courageous will gain “immortal glory” that outlives them, and that their descendants will recognize their own roots and seek to emulate their virtue.³⁰
- Livy (first century BCE to first century CE): historical knowledge offers models to imitate and shun (Livy pref. 9–10).³¹

Tendencies in the Prayers of First and Second Maccabees,” *Early Christianity* 2 (2, 2011): 198–218.

²⁷ T. Penner, “Civilizing Discourse: Acts, Declamation, and the Rhetoric of the *Polis*,” pages 65–104 in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele; SBLSymS 20; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), 73–77.

²⁸ Polybius 1.1.1 (LCL); for lessons, cf., e.g., 1.35.1–10.

²⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.2.1.

³⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.6.3–5; cf. Diodorus Siculus 15.1.1; 37.4.1.

³¹ A. M. Gowing, “Memory as Motive in Tacitus,” pages 43–64 in *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity* (ed. K. Galinsky; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 46.

- Valerius Maximus (early first century CE) insists that it is helpful to know history “so that a backward look . . . may yield some profit to modern manners” (Val. Max. 2.pref. [LCL]).
- Tacitus (early second century CE), one of our most reliable historical sources for the early empire
 - emphasizes that the study of history promotes virtue (*Agr.* 1), offering models for moral imitation (46);
 - notes that he freely omitted material not of value to history’s primary, moral objective (*Ann.* 3.65).
- Lucian (second century CE), a stickler for historians’ historical accuracy, allows for history’s edifying value, i.e., moral lessons, provided they flow from truth (e.g., *Hist.* 59).
- The intellectual orator Maximus of Tyre (late second century) opines that history preserves the memories of humanity and so “guards its virtues” (Max. Tyre 22.5 [trans. Trapp]).

Among first-century Jewish authors in Greek, Philo of Alexandria, Paul, and Josephus all concur that Scripture records earlier actions to provide models for imitation or warnings.³²

One of history’s moral lessons was sometimes the importance of piety toward the gods.³³ Although gentile historians had special interest in practical human models, they also worked from particular assumptions about the gods. Hellenistic Jewish and many gentile historians even sought to interpret the divine will in some patterns in history.³⁴ Luke highlights the theological agenda more than do many gentile historians, but biblical historiography provided ready models.³⁵

Historical Information in Ancient Historiography

Historians wrote to provide moral and political instruction, but in contrast to writers using some other genres, they sought to provide such instruction

³² Philo, *Abr.* 4; 1 Cor 10:11; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.204.

³³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.56.1.

³⁴ See Squires, *Plan*, 15–20, 38–51; K. Crabbe, “Being Found Fighting against God Luke’s Gamaliel and Josephus on Human Responses to Divine Providence,” *ZNW* 106 (1, 2015): 21–39.

³⁵ See, e.g., the theodicy of Kings, explaining the exile as judgment (2 Kgs 17:7; 21:11–15). Comparing Luke and Josephus, note, e.g., Sterling, *Historiography*; idem, “The First History of Christianity Constructing Christian Identity from a Jewish Historiographical Tradition,” *Pneumatika* 4 (2, 2016): 3–22; H. W. Attridge, “Josephus, Luke, and the Uses of History,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41 (4, 2014): 335–48.

by using what they understood as the genuine past. The interpreted past provided moral models or illustrations, and historians thus defined their art as factual, despite their rhetorical embellishments:³⁶

- History is supposed to be truthful.³⁷
- The historian must provide unmixed truth.³⁸
- Historians therefore harshly criticized other historians whom they accused of promoting falsehood, especially when they believed that they exhibited self-serving agendas.³⁹
- To a lesser extent, they critiqued those who unknowingly got their facts wrong.⁴⁰
- More damagingly, a writer who consistently presented the least favorable interpretation, ignoring the diverse views of his sources, could be accused of malice.⁴¹
- Polybius argues that the goal of history, unlike myth, is purely truth.⁴²
- Even a particularly rhetorically focused, pre-Christian historian, writing essays on earlier historians' rhetoric, might emphasize the importance of truth-telling,⁴³ that a careful historian's literary skill "does not excuse history from such exaggeration,"⁴⁴ and that that history involves truth rather than legends, and that one should pursue facts, "neither adding to nor subtracting from" them.⁴⁵
- In the early empire, Tacitus warns against comparing his sober history with implausible rumors and fictions.⁴⁶

³⁶ I borrow the following list from Keener, *Christobiography*, 205–6, which in turn mostly condenses material from *Acts* (vol. 1) and from *Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009). See also now Baum, "Verhältnis der Apostelgeschichte."

³⁷ E.g., Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.26; *Ant.* 20.156–57; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 8.

³⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 8.56.

³⁹ Josephus, *Life* 336–39; Diodorus Siculus, 21.17.1; Lucian, *Hist.* 24–25.

⁴⁰ Diodorus Siculus, 1.37.4, 6.

⁴¹ So Plutarch, *Mal. Hdt.* 3–7, *Mor.* 855C–856B; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Pomp.* 3.

⁴² Polybius 34.4.2–3. For further discussion of Polybius's high ideal standards, see Keener, *Acts*, 1:124–26.

⁴³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 55; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 8.56; 20.156–57.

⁴⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 19 (LCL 1:513); see Thucydides 1.1.1–2; 1.21.2; 1.23.1–2. Most did allow occasional hyperbole; see, e.g., Thucydides 8.96.1 (cf. 2.94.1); Polybius 1.4.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.2.

⁴⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 8 (LCL 1:479), an ideal, however, that Dionysius himself did not always achieve. Dionysius wanted to explore events' causes (*Ant. rom.* 5.56.1).

⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.11.

Detractors today sometimes play down ancient historians' claims to pursue accuracy as merely a literary convention. Yet while some historians failed to live up to the aspirations expressed in such claims, nonhistorians also expected histories to be based on correct information. Thus:

- Aristotle distinguishes “history” and “poetry” not by their literary style, since one could put Herodotus into verse if one wished; but that history recounts what actually happened whereas poetry (i.e., epic poetry and drama) recounts what might happen.⁴⁷
- Thus, for Aristotle, poetry is more philosophical, conveying general truths, whereas history conveys specific facts.⁴⁸
- In the first century BCE, Cicero recognized the standard expectation for historians to avoid falsehood and partiality.⁴⁹
- The first-century CE rhetorician Quintilian
 - divides narrative into (1) epic poetry and tragedy, which differs from current reality;⁵⁰ (2) comedy, which plays on realism; and (3) history, “which is an exposition of something done”;⁵¹
 - expects historians to provide genuine facts.⁵²
- Pliny the Younger (61–113 CE) recognizes that
 - material for history must be based on genuine facts;⁵³
 - history's *primary* goal is truth and accuracy rather than rhetorical display.⁵⁴
- The geographer Pausanias explicitly distinguishes historical research from “childhood knowledge of choruses and tragedies . . .”⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Poet.* 9.2, 1451b; cf. Thucydides 1.21.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 9.33.1; Lucian, *Hist.* 8, 22; Menander Rhetor 1.1.333.31–1.1.334.5.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Poet.* 9.3, 1451b. See also A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 66, citing Aristotle, *Poetics* 9, 23.

⁴⁹ M. L. W. Laistner, *The Greater Roman Historians* (Berkeley: University of California Press; London: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 33–35, citing Cicero, *Fam.* 5.12; *Att.* 2.1.2; Fornara, *Nature*, 138–39, citing Cicero, *De or.* 2.15.62–63.

⁵⁰ Most epic poetry and tragedy addressed the distant mythological or legendary past.

⁵¹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.4.2, in A. Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 35. Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.4.1 in Becker, *Birth*, 62.

⁵² Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.34 in Becker, *Birth*, 62.

⁵³ Pliny, *Ep.* 8.4.1. For the emphasis on facts in ancient historiography, see also Byrskog, *Story*, 179–84; cf. Menander Rhetor 1.1.333.31–1.1.334.5.

⁵⁴ Pliny, *Ep.* 7.17.3. Accuracy was praiseworthy (Pliny, *Ep.* 5.5.3; 5.8.5; cf. 9.19.5).

⁵⁵ Pausanias, 1.3.3 (LCL 1:15, 17).

- The second-century satirist Lucian is particularly emphatic:
 - history employs rules “different from poetry and poems,” which can blame their excesses on inspiration;⁵⁶
 - true history must not include even the slightest lies;⁵⁷ its utility comes from truth alone;⁵⁸
 - only bad historians invent data;⁵⁹
 - the historian must recount only what happened, sacrificing to no deity except Truth;⁶⁰
 - truth “is the one thing peculiar to history,” he noted; one writing history must ignore all other concerns;⁶¹
 - the historian must be faithful to truth, not flattery.⁶²

Although historians did not always cite them, they regularly used sources; this was a characteristic feature of the genre. For recent events they could use oral history; beyond living memory, they became more dependent on written sources that (ideally) reflected living memory of the events. Like historians today, most ancient historians preferred sources closest to the events, with eyewitnesses being best of all.⁶³ Writing while eyewitnesses remained who could challenge errors in one’s account also underlined the author’s confidence in his account.⁶⁴

When the historian himself (back then, historians were normally male) was an eyewitness, he would normally mention this in the narrative. Historians could include themselves in either the first (“I”) or third (“he”) person. Politically ambitious writers such as Caesar highlighted their presence wherever possible; by contrast, the narratorial presence in Acts is restrained, maintaining a consistent focus in those sections on Paul (see “Authorship” below and comment at Acts 16:10).

Some sources were, however, considered too recent: those writing about current events risked greater criticism or even political pressure from living

⁵⁶ Lucian, *Hist.* 8 (trans. LCL 6:13).

⁵⁷ *Hist.* 7.

⁵⁸ *Hist.* 9.

⁵⁹ E.g., *Hist.* 24–25.

⁶⁰ *Hist.* 39.

⁶¹ *Hist.* 40 (LCL 6:55).

⁶² *Hist.* 62.

⁶³ Byrskog, *Story*, 153–57; G. Schepens, “Some Aspects of Source Theory in Greek Historiography,” pages 100–18 in *Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. J. Marincola; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114; cf., e.g., Josephus, *Life* 357; *Ag. Ap.* 1.45–49, 56; *War* 1.2–3; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.33; 15.73; Pliny, *Ep.* 5.8.12–13.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.266; *Life* 359–66.

persons, increasing the possibility of bias. For example, the military historian Velleius Paterculus is as stunningly lavish in his praise of the praetorian prefect Sejanus as the later historian Tacitus is vituperative in his denunciations. That the former wrote while Sejanus retained power is no doubt a significant factor in the difference (notwithstanding some anti-Tiberian bias on Tacitus's part as well).

More relevant was concern with historical perspective. Some events and concerns that loom prominent at the moment prove fleeting over the long haul of history. Paul undoubtedly saw his collection (e.g., Rom 15:25–27; 2 Cor 8–9) as a major step to unify the Judean and Diaspora churches; the collection's role would be a less prominent memory, however, after the Jerusalem church ceased to exist. Thus in Acts, the collection appears only in Acts 24:17, and there only peripherally.

Many historians were critical with their sources, though few proved as demanding as Polybius. For Polybius,

- “The *most* important” component of history-writing was investigation.⁶⁵
- Such investigation particularly includes interviewing witnesses and those who heard them, and then critically evaluating their reports.⁶⁶
- For contemporary history, dependence only on written sources is insufficient;⁶⁷ one must travel to sites and interview witnesses.⁶⁸
- When possible, Polybius uses documentary evidence.⁶⁹
- He rejects sensationalizing accounts to make them more graphic.⁷⁰
- He rejects unverifiable hearsay about distant lands.⁷¹
- He rejects sources that are often self-contradictory and careless.⁷²

Even some objects of Polybius's critiques agreed in principle with basic historical standards: the greatest sin in historiography is falsehood, and those who compose falsehood should choose a different name for their work than history.⁷³ Sometimes even minor errors could generate

⁶⁵ Polybius 12.4c.2–5, esp. 3.

⁶⁶ Polybius 12.4c.4–5.

⁶⁷ Cf. Polybius 12.25e.7; 12.25i.2.

⁶⁸ Polybius 12.9.2; 12.25e.1; cf. 12.3.1–2.

⁶⁹ Polybius 3.33.17–18 (citing here a bronze tablet of Hannibal).

⁷⁰ Polybius 2.56.7, 10; 15.34.1. Polybius himself reports graphic bloodshed (15.33), but claims that he avoids amplifying it (15.34). Contrast the criticism of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 15, that Thucydides sometimes fails to evoke the full horror of war.

⁷¹ Polybius 3.38.3.

⁷² Polybius 2.56.1–3; cf. 12.4d.1–2.

⁷³ Polybius 12.11.7–8; cf. 12.12.1–3; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.1.

criticism.⁷⁴ Given ancient Mediterranean zeal for honor, harsh peer review⁷⁵ helped guarantee some basic consensus standards that developed over time – although historians, including Polybius, were more apt to apply these standards to other authors than to themselves.

ACTS AND HISTORY

A broad middle range of scholarship today, while unwilling to defend Luke on every point, finds his story largely reliable, and certainly by the standards used to evaluate hellenistic historiography generally.⁷⁶ Even most more conservative voices allow for Luke's selection and arrangement of information according to his agendas; and even most more skeptical voices believe that Luke preserves significant information,⁷⁷ although evaluating him more strictly than would his contemporaries. Having also written detailed commentaries on Matthew and John, I am far more impressed with Luke's historiographic interest and acumen.⁷⁸

In general, as I have noted, ancient historiography arranged and interpreted information about the past to inform behavioral choices for the present and future. Some historical works were, however, more accurate than others. How can we evaluate where Acts belongs on this spectrum?

One criterion, of somewhat limited value, is the author's style and rhetorical level. More rhetorically lavish historians, such as Dionysius and Josephus, might stray farther from their sources than did some others. Luke does not qualify as such as elite historian. Conversely, more popular authors might also adapt popular storytelling techniques, so the stylistic criterion tells us little in Luke's particular case; neither sophisticated nor popular styles by themselves guarantee a given level of accuracy.

⁷⁴ Cf. Velleius Paterculus 2.53.4 on an age error of five years.

⁷⁵ E.g., Polybius 12.3.1–12.15.12; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.24–25; Lucian, *Hist.* 7, 11, 15, 17, 22–23, 43–45.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Hengel, *Acts and History*, 60; Johnson, "Luke-Acts," 406; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 127; C. K. Barrett, "The Historicity of Acts," *JTS* 50 (2, 1999): 515–34; idem, *Acts*, xxxiii–lxii, esp. xxxiii–xlili; Dunn, *Acts*, xvi–xviii; Parsons, *Acts*, 7–8. Among historians of antiquity, see, e.g., E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* (3 vols.; Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1921–23), 2–3, as cited in Bruce, *Acts*, 27 (himself trained as a classicist).

⁷⁷ E.g., G. Lüdemann, "Acts of the Apostles as a Historical Source," pages 109–25 in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee* (ed. J. Neusner et al.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988).

⁷⁸ Perhaps because of modern historiographic ideals' affinity for and development from hellenistic historiography.

Another partial criterion is the information that Luke takes for granted, although this criterion is sometimes subjective. Thus, for example, Luke speaks of the house of John Mark's mother as well-known (12:12), and he seems to presuppose knowledge of John Mark (12:12) and James the Just (12:17). Luke does not specify that James was Jesus's brother (Gal 1:19; 2:12), but that some degree of leadership would pass to the Lord's brother (Acts 12:17; 15:13–22; 21:18) fits Middle Eastern kin expectations. Such knowledge suggests that Theophilus had heard somewhat more than the gospel tradition itself (Luke 1:4).

Another literary clue may be where Luke seems to condense a source. Luke appears to take for granted the role of Blastus (12:20), although he probably was *not* known to Luke's audience. Sometimes Paul's speeches may even allude to particular OT texts in proximity that Luke does not spell out, for example Hab 1:5 and 2:4 in Acts 13:39–41, and Ezek 33:4–8 and 34:2–10 in Acts 20:26–29.

The criterion of embarrassment suggests the authenticity of negative material included by Luke, who normally likes to portray early Christianity positively. We would hardly expect Luke to invent the complaint of the widows in 6:1 and then work (as he does) to soften the charge. Nor would Luke likely invent the conflict between Paul and Barnabas (15:37–39). Far from inventing the conflicts behind the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1, 5), Luke seems eager to highlight the peaceful resolution (15:28–29). Nor would Luke have invented Tyrian prophecies (21:4) worded as if prohibiting Paul from doing what he in fact did. Nor, on the usual dating of Acts, would Luke invent Paul's appeal to a Roman emperor (25:10) – Nero – who by Luke's day was known for persecuting the church.⁷⁹ Most important, in view of 24:5, Luke has more reason to omit than to invent the riots surrounding Paul's ministry (16:20–22; 19:27–29; 21:27–30; 22:22–23).

Essential but incidental information is also likely; for example, the Hellenists' mission in Antioch in 11:19 is incidental to Luke's focus on major characters like Barnabas and Paul (who arrive only afterward), hence probably reflects pre-Lukan information too widely known to ignore.

A stronger criterion, noted earlier, is that of date. Authors closer to the events, or at least depending on sources closer to the events, generally have

⁷⁹ From the early Christian perspective, Nero's persecution, even if some treated it as establishing precedent, was an idiosyncratic expression of Nero's own wickedness, whereas previous Roman precedents had favored tolerance for Christians.

more accurate material, as ancient historians also recognized. Even on a minority, early second-century date, Luke writes Acts within living memory of Paul's ministry; on the more dominant first-century date, he could have even witnessed some of the events himself.

After the infancy narratives, the material in Luke's Gospel depicts events c. 30, just some two decades before Paul's earliest letters. The final quarter of the Book of Acts depicts events around the year 60, roughly ten years before the most common critical date for Mark's Gospel. All these events were within living memory, the period in which oral historians find the least distortion;⁸⁰ much of Paul's ministry would lie within the period of Luke's Christian experience; and the final quarter of Acts may have included Luke as a direct observer. By the standards of ancient historiography, Luke should be considered an excellent source.

Another potentially helpful criterion is the author's stated methodology. Although not all authors' claims to accuracy were equally meaningful, their research agenda at least brings us closer to understanding what they valued. Here a brief examination of Luke's preface (a section below) will be helpful.

A final criterion, and one that merits more detailed engagement below, is how Luke compares with other sources where we can test him. By ancient standards, Luke's use of Mark and probably Q in his Gospel proves extraordinarily conservative.⁸¹ Luke probably lacked the same sort of continuous written sources for Acts,⁸² but we may expect his historiographic commitments to remain the same.

In Acts, we cannot compare Luke with his sources, but we can compare many of his claims with external data. Such comparisons make clear enough that Luke is writing ancient historiography, rather than engaging in the more imaginative, less constrained practices of novelists.

⁸⁰ J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 173, 192–93, 197; cf. W. D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament: A Guide to Its Main Witnesses* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 116; Keener, *Christobiography*, 449–96. On recent memory in ancient historiography, see J. J. Peters, "Ancient Historiography and Jesus Research: Reassessing Luke's Preface and Historical Narrative" (PhD dissertation, Regent University, 2018).

⁸¹ See J. S. Kloppenborg, "Variation in the Reproduction of the Double Tradition and an Oral Q?" *ETL* 83 (2007): 53–80, here 63, 67–70; Licona, *Differences*, 20–21.

⁸² Scholars have tried to reconstruct Acts' sources, but most such reconstructions are highly speculative. For one of the most thorough studies, see Dupont, *Sources*.

LUKE'S HISTORICAL PREFACE

In the preface to his two-volume work (continued with a secondary preface in Acts 1:1), Luke mentions, probably especially concerning the events recounted in his Gospel, that many wrote before him (Luke 1:1). Historical writers might complain about predecessors who showed more interest in rhetoric than in accuracy,⁸³ or that their predecessors lacked some key information.⁸⁴ Although some writers criticized predecessors,⁸⁵ however, others simply distinguished themselves from them.⁸⁶

Luke's language is far less harsh than that of writers who genuinely criticized their predecessors, and need not imply that he is claiming that they lacked eyewitness sources that he has.⁸⁷ Some writers noted that they simply had a fresh perspective to add to the work of their predecessors,⁸⁸ or simply recounted material in a new way.⁸⁹ Although Luke is not denigrating his predecessors' accuracy, he may be implying his rhetorical superiority: he promises an *orderly* (Gr. *kathexês*) account, that is, its proper sequencing of events in terms of cause and effect.⁹⁰

Luke also assures his dedicatee, Theophilus, that Luke has direct acquaintance with the subject about which he writes (Luke 1:3). The NRSV's *investigating everything* captures some of the sense, but the wording elsewhere in historical prefaces suggests an even more direct acquaintance than investigation; it can even imply participation in some of the narrative, an implication consistent with the narratorial "we" later in the work (see comment at Acts 16:10).

⁸³ Dio Cassius 1.1.1–2; Herodian 1.1.1–2.

⁸⁴ Diodorus Siculus 1.37.4, 6; Tacitus, *Agr.* 10.

⁸⁵ Polybius 3.32.4–5; Josephus, *War* 1.1–2, 7; *Ant.* 20.154–57; Longinus *Subl.* 1.1; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.1.1.

⁸⁶ Vitruvius, *Architecture* 7. pref. 10–18; Valerius Maximus 1. pref.; Quintilian, *Inst.* 1. pref. 1–2; cf. 3.1.22.

⁸⁷ V. K. Robbins, "The Claims of the Prologues and Greco-Roman Rhetoric: The Prefaces to Luke and Acts in Light of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Strategies," pages 63–83 in Moessner, *Heritage*, 73–75, 83, arguing that Luke instead intends to provide a continuous account "from the beginning to Rome." Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 371, also doubts that Luke criticizes his predecessors' accuracy.

⁸⁸ Xenophon, *Apol.* 1–2; cf. Diodorus Siculus 1.3.1.

⁸⁹ Aulus Gellius pref. 11–12; Nicolaus, *Progymn.* 1. pref. 1.

⁹⁰ D. P. Moessner, "The Appeal and Power of Poetics (Luke 1:1–4): Luke's Superior Credentials (παρηκολουθηκότι), Narrative Sequence (καθεξῆς), and Firmness of Understanding (ἡ ἀσφάλεια) for the Reader," pages 84–123 in Moessner, *Heritage*, 97–112.

But whether by research or other means, the verb *parakolouthēō*, translated here as “investigating,” denotes such *thorough* acquaintance that Luke is in a position to evaluate the accuracy of the reports he receives.⁹¹ Investigation, focused on field interviews, was at the heart of conventional Greek historiography.⁹² Roman historians saw less need to travel, having access in Rome to records and reports, but as an eastern Mediterranean author writing in Greek, Luke undoubtedly fits the Greek mold better, at least for the Aegean areas, Jerusalem and coastal Judea.

Luke’s appeal to *autoptai* (eyewitnesses) fits historians’ appreciation for research and valuing of eyewitness sources.⁹³

In Greek, Luke climaxes his preface with the term *truth* (*asphaleia*, sometimes translated “certainty”; 1:4), emphasizing that a primary purpose in his work is to confirm what Theophilus and others already know.⁹⁴ This suggests that Luke’s story ultimately is consistent with his sources. Many stories Luke includes in his Gospel were probably already widely disseminated, and other information may have also been broadly disseminated among many churches.

Modern notions that geographically distinct Christian communities were theologically and socially isolated from one another are implausible. Well before the publication of Acts, urban Christians traveled (1 Cor 16:10, 12, 17; Phil 2:30; 4:18), carrying letters (Rom 16:1–2; Phil 2:25) and greetings to other churches (Rom 16:21–23; 1 Cor 16:19; Phil 4:22; Col 4:10–15). Likewise, many churches knew what was happening with churches in other cities (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 11:16; 14:33; Col 4:16; 1 Thess 1:7–9); missionaries could speak about some churches to others (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1–5; 9:2–4; Phil 4:16; 1 Thess 2:14–16) and send personal news by other workers (Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7–9).

⁹¹ See L. C. A. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1* (SNTSMS 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 128–30; Moessner, “Poetics,” 85–97.

⁹² Fornara, *Nature of History*, 47–48; Aune, *Environment*, 81–82; K. Meister, “Historiography: Greece,” *BNP* 6:418–21 (421). See, e.g., Herodotus 1.1; 2.52; Thucydides 1.22.1–3; 5.26; Polybius 3.48.12; 4.2.2; 4.38.11; 10.11.4; 12.4C.1–5; Diodorus Siculus 1.4.1, 4–5; Appian, *Hist. rom.* pref. 12; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.23.606; Herodian 1.1.3.

⁹³ Cf. Alexander, *Preface*, 34–41, esp. 38; Byrskog, *Story*, 48–64, 122; for Luke, cf. Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 213–90.

⁹⁴ Cf. R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 21, 186, emphasizing “confirmation” as a primary purpose of Luke-Acts; *asphaleia* is the climactic, final word of Luke’s preface.

COMPARING LUKE WITH OTHER SOURCES

When comparing Luke with other sources, we should compare what he includes more than what he omits. Given Luke's single monograph covering three decades, neither Luke nor anyone else would pretend that he offers an exhaustive treatment of all available information. All ancient histories⁹⁵ and biographies⁹⁶ are selective; indeed, individual memory omits much that it initially perceived.⁹⁷ Historians must select from their information the elements most relevant for their particular story and purposes.⁹⁸ Indeed, sometimes classicists find Luke the only and best source available for some aspects of life in the eastern Mediterranean world of his day.⁹⁹

Often as little as 4 percent of biographies written even about contemporary figures is attested elsewhere.¹⁰⁰ If we could accept only those claims in ancient historians that are attested certainly independently in other historians, we would know little about antiquity. To the extent that those historians depend on sources where we can check them, however, we are usually safe to assume that they followed the same methodology where we cannot check them; they had no way to foreknow which sources would survive their generation to ours. More than a century ago the liberal historian Adolf von Harnack concluded that the agreements are so

⁹⁵ See Polybius 6.11.7–8; Jerome, *Ep. Gal.* 1.2.11; A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 91, 211; R. A. Derrenbacker, Jr., *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (BETS 186; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 91, 93; C. Pelling, *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 100–1, 119; Keener, *Acts*, 194–96.

⁹⁶ M. Ytterbrink, *The Third Gospel for the First Time: Luke within the Context of Ancient Biography* (Lund: Lund University – Centrum för teologi och religionsvetenskap, 2004), 94; B. McGing, “Philo’s Adaptation of the Bible in His *Life of Moses*,” pages 117–40 in *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (ed. B. McGing and J. Mossman; Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 120, 131–33; Licona, *Differences*, 2, 20, 51, 56, 72, 75, 77, 95, 109.

⁹⁷ R. K. McIver, *Memory, Jesus, and the Synoptic Gospels* (SBL Resources for Biblical Study 59; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011), 48.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Polybius 15.36.10; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.65; Plutarch, *Aem. Paul.* 1.2; *Alex.* 1.2; Justin, *Epit.* pref. 4.

⁹⁹ E.g., M. P. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* (2nd rev. ed.; New York: Cooper Square, 1970), 85–86.

¹⁰⁰ See thoroughly E. T. Wright, “On the Historical Reliability of Ancient Biographies: A Thorough Examination of Xenophon’s *Agésilas*, Cornelius Nepos’s *Atticus*, Tacitus’s *Agricola*, and *The Gospel according to John*” (PhD dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2019).

substantial where Luke can be checked that doubting him where he cannot be is wildly speculative.¹⁰¹

While not establishing historicity, local color is consistent with it; Luke's local color is usually accurate even in obscure cases that few would have cared about.¹⁰² For example, scholars often point to Luke's correct titles for local officials, titles often known only locally and therefore by those who encountered or inquired about officials in such locales (e.g., Acts 12:1; 13:1; 16:20; 17:6, 8; 19:35; 25:13).¹⁰³ Classicists often comment, for example, on Luke's accurate depiction of the religious life of Ephesus.¹⁰⁴

More compellingly, external sources independently and generally incidentally confirm many details in Acts; one compilation of such correspondences runs to more than one hundred pages.¹⁰⁵ Although some correspondences are matters that would have been widely known (e.g., Philippi was a Roman colony; Thyatira was a center for dyeing), others, such as the topography of the Anatolian interior, would need to rest on information from someone who traveled to (or lived in) the regions in question. To get correct the proper names of officials in a particular time and place (such as Gallio, Felix, and Festus) would require information from the right time; novelists did not bother to research such details. For example,

- Luke's information regarding the African official (8:27) fits ancient historical accounts of Meroë better than it fits ancient fictional ones.¹⁰⁶
- Peter's escape from custody (12:7–12) fits what is known of Agrippa's character and tenure, as well as, more strikingly, Jerusalem's topography.
- Josephus confirms that Agrippa died after accepting public adulation in Caesarea (12:19–23).

¹⁰¹ A. von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles* (trans. J. R. Wilkinson; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 272.

¹⁰² Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 198–201, esp. 201; Wallace and Williams, *Acts*, 27.

¹⁰³ Emphasized already by Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 40–41.

¹⁰⁴ OCD³ 528; F. Millar, *The Roman Empire and Its Neighbours* (New York: Dell, 1967), 199; quoted in D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf, "Preface," pages ix–xiii in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, xiii.

¹⁰⁵ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 108–220, most fruitfully 108–58.

¹⁰⁶ See C. S. Keener, "Novels' 'Exotic' Places and Luke's African Official (Acts 8:27)," *AUSS* 46 (1, 2008): 5–20.

- Archaeology attests the Sergii Paulii (13:7).
- Iconium was ethnically Phrygian rather than Lycaonian (14:6).
- Unlike most towns where Paul traveled, Lystra would have people speaking a local language (14:11).
- Zeus and Hermes are particularly paired in this area (14:12).
- Traveling from the Cilician Gates, one would reach Derbe before Lystra (16:1).
- A major congregating place for Athenian Stoics (17:18) was near the Areopagus (17:19).
- The specific quotations in 17:28 might derive from authors and contexts fitting Paul's background in Tarsus (Aratus) and his "unknown deity" allusion (Epimenides), perhaps implying that Luke or his source abbreviates a lengthier Pauline speech in Attica.
- 18:2 fits the likeliest period of Claudius' expulsion.
- The timing of Paul's appearance before Gallio fits precisely (18:12).
- The unusual title *hê theos* (mixing a masculine noun with a feminine article; 19:37) appears frequently for Artemis in inscriptions from Roman Ephesus.
- The penalty for gentiles entering the temple was death (21:28).
- The Roman cohort in the Antonia remained ready to quell disturbances in the temple (21:31).
- Soldiers in the Antonia descended a staircase into the temple courts (21:35, 40).
- The Egyptian Jewish false prophet's activity (21:38) was recent from the standpoint of the narrative world.
- The *nomen* "Claudius" (23:26) fits recent acquisition of citizenship under Claudius, under whom the grant was frequent; it was cheaper toward the end of his reign (22:28).
- Ananias is the correct high priest for the narrative date (23:2).
- Felix's tenure fits the narrative date (23:24).
- Antipatris is the correct military stop from Jerusalem to Caesarea; the road is documented; it was also the correct location (in more gentile territory) where the infantry could be dismissed (23:31).
- Drusilla, perhaps about nineteen at the time depicted in the narrative, was married to Felix at this time (in contrast to her and his earlier marriages; 24:24).
- The name and timing of Porcius Festus (24:27) are correct.
- The presence of Bernice with Agrippa II fits this period (unlike the times that she was married; 25:13).

- The itinerary, weather conditions, and sailors' actions are correct down to minute details in most of 27:1–28:15.¹⁰⁷

Such correspondences should quickly dispel any misplaced notions that Luke writes a novel or that he was a careless historian unconcerned with detail.¹⁰⁸

COMPARISONS WITH PAUL

Paul's letters provide a particularly detailed external source for comparison. Their correspondences with the Pauline portion of Acts are too incidental to suggest Luke's dependence on them,¹⁰⁹ yet they often confirm minor details. (For example, Acts omits the collection and most names and issues in the Corinthian correspondence, yet that correspondence randomly confirms numerous incidental details in Acts. Luke never mentions Paul's monumental letter to the Roman believers.) By comparison with other ancient histories or biographies, such parallels between Paul's letters and Acts appear quite often in proportion to Acts' size.

What Not to Expect

Some scholars are skeptical about Luke's depiction of Paul,¹¹⁰ whereas others find much greater congruence.¹¹¹ Luke exalts Paul's rhetorical skill whereas Paul plays it down (though not as much, apparently, as did some

¹⁰⁷ See Hemer, *Acts in History*, 132–56; J. Smith, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul* (4th ed.; London: Longmans, Green, 1880).

¹⁰⁸ On Luke's usual reliability on major points, see Hemer, *Acts in History*; Hengel, *Acts and History*; Keener, *Acts*, 1:51–319; briefly, P. L. Maier, "Luke as a Hellenistic Historian," pages 413–34 in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (ed. S. Porter and A. W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹⁰⁹ Favoring dependence, see R. I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006), 51–147; but direct or indirect knowledge of Paul could have achieved the same connections. Most scholars (e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015], 149) oppose dependence on Paul's letters. Paul's letters assume disproportionate significance as living memory of Paul faded; during his lifetime, his personal presence and teaching would weigh more heavily, and Luke, who has other material, nowhere draws attention to this dimension of Paul's ministry. Biographers sometimes used letters but literary and access constraints limited this practice (M. Trapp, "Biography in Letters; Biography and Letters," 335–50 in *Limits of Biography* [ed. McGing and Mossman], 336–39).

¹¹⁰ E.g., P. Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," pages 33–50 in Keck and Martyn, *Studies*; Haenchen, "The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Early Christianity," pages 258–78 in *ibid*.

¹¹¹ E.g., J. Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984), 68–76.

Corinthians!) Luke emphasizes Paul's social status, whereas Paul eschews such boasts. Paul's letters emphasize the cross more than do typical Pauline speeches in Acts (where the focus, as often in speeches in Acts, is more on the resurrection).

It should not surprise us that Luke's interests sometimes differ from Paul's. The struggles of, say, Galatian Christians c. 50 CE differ significantly from the questions of Christians grappling theologically with Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE.¹¹² Obviously there are significant differences between what Luke wishes to emphasize about Paul and what Paul would have emphasized about himself; but then, no one claims that *Paul* wrote the Book of Acts.¹¹³ Even if, as many scholars think, Luke traveled with Paul, he respected other theological sources in addition to Paul (the Jerusalem church, for example). Had Barnabas or Timothy composed memoirs about Paul, would we expect any more of a treatise on Pauline theology?

Paul's readers have reapplied him as a model in various ways through history, say, as a paradigm of virtue (Chrysostom) or one struggling with the flesh (Augustine), not because they lacked access to shared information about Paul (in this case, Acts and the letters) but because their questions and interests differed.

Other historical analogies should readily disabuse us of faulty expectations. Xenophon and Plato interpreted Socrates quite differently; two different collections do likewise for the Stoic teacher Musonius Rufus. The same is true in modern times. Two early historians working from authentic eyewitness sources constructed quite different portraits of Lincoln, not because either was writing fiction but because they emphasized different aspects of the person.¹¹⁴ My children, my students and my siblings all know me, but were they asked to write about me they would each emphasize different aspects of my life and (at least among my students) teachings.¹¹⁵

¹¹² See, e.g., F. F. Bruce, "Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?" *BJRL* 58 (2, 1976): 282–305.

¹¹³ Cf. Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 206: "these are merely the kinds of differences that one could expect to find between virtually any two different yet accomplished authors when writing about the same events."

¹¹⁴ See B. Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke, There's Fire: Memory and History," pages 7–37 in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz* (ed. T. Thatcher; Semeia Studies 78; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014), 7–8, 13; idem, "Harvest," pages 313–37 in *ibid.*, 327–28.

¹¹⁵ Nor could readers of my academic works reconstruct much of the picture that emerges of my life experience in the popular-level C. S. Keener and M. M. Keener, *Impossible Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen, 2016).

Even orators noted that they wrote letters in a style that differed starkly from their speeches.¹¹⁶ All Paul's letters are to churches or Christians, so we must expect Paul's approach there to differ from Paul's evangelistic speeches in Acts (though we do find parallels in his own allusions to his evangelistic preaching; cf., e.g., Acts 14:15 with 1 Thess 1:9). The one speech in Acts that most closely approximates Paul's paranetic instruction in his letters (Acts 20:18–35) is, not coincidentally, the only speech attributed to him in Acts that addresses Christians.¹¹⁷

Modern scholars who, based on Paul's occasional letters, find the Paul of Acts incompatible with the Paul of the letters, may assume greater knowledge than they should about Paul's larger theology and ministry. While Luke probably did not understand all the contours of Paul's theology elaborated in some of his letters (a not surprising problem; cf. 2 Pet 3:16), neither do many of his modern critics. Bultmann contrasted Luke as a salvation historian unfavorably with his existentialist epistolary Paul – a view of the historical Paul no longer deemed compelling.¹¹⁸

One of the primary objections to the Paul of Acts, voiced by an earlier generation of German Lutheran scholars, was his fidelity to his Jewish heritage and the law (esp. Acts 16:3; 18:18; 21:26).¹¹⁹ Yet contemporary Pauline scholarship has moved on, generally finding more congruence between Paul and the law, and some today viewing Paul as “very Jewish,” as in Acts.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ See explicitly Cicero, *Fam.* 9.21.1.

¹¹⁷ See Walton, *Leadership*.

¹¹⁸ See U. Wilckens, “Interpreting Luke-Acts in a Period of Existentialist Theology,” pages 60–83 in Keck and Martyn, *Studies*, 75, 77, for critique of this old Bultmannian approach.

¹¹⁹ See esp. Vielhauer, “Paulinism,” e.g., 42. For more extensive critiques of Vielhauser, see, e.g., Peder Borgen, “From Paul to Luke: Observations toward Clarification of the Theology of Luke-Acts,” *CBQ* 31 (1969): 168–82, esp. 181; K.P. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; London: T&T Clark, 2002), 90–96; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 145–47; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 189–206; M.B. Thompson, “Paul in the Book of Acts”; Keener, *Acts*, 1:250–52.

¹²⁰ E.g., M. D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 4, 21, 240, esp. 18, 338. In addition to many Christian traditions that never treated Paul and the law as antithetical, note the now widespread “new perspective” and “Paul within Judaism” approaches; cf., e.g., D. J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (WUNT 304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); M. D. Nanos, “Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?,” pages 117–60 in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle* (ed. Mark D. Given; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010); R. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015); M. D. Nanos and M. Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*

Paul's own thought in various letters appears diverse.¹²¹ Paul the letter-writer alludes to entire aspects of his public ministry, such as miracle-working (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12) or private mystic experiences (1 Cor 14:18; 2 Cor 12:2–4), that must have engaged much of his attention personally, yet they consume little space in his letters.¹²²

Scholars who try to write about Paul while bracketing Acts as “secondary” are left with massive lacunae in their knowledge that they sometimes fill with speculation. Although letters are firsthand, they are incomplete and reflect their own biases.¹²³ Scholars today sometimes use biographies, which admittedly vary in their reliability, to complement information in the biographees' letters.¹²⁴ Likewise, we do not ordinarily construct a picture of the Roman republic's civil war merely from Cicero's letters; rather we use them to illustrate, clarify, and qualify the narratives in Roman historians.

Correspondences between Paul's Letters and Acts

Von Harnack listed thirty-nine cases where Paul's letters corroborate Acts, and his list is not exhaustive.¹²⁵ Correspondences include, for example, the following:

- The Twelve led the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:13; 6:2; Gal 1:17; 1 Cor 15:5).
- Peter and John “stand out” among the Twelve (Acts 3:1–11; 8:14–17; Gal 2:9).

(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015); I. W. Oliver, “The ‘Historical Paul’ and the Paul of Acts,” pages 51–80 in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. G. Boccaccinni and C. A. Segovia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 71; Sanders, *Paul: Life*.

¹²¹ So much so that Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 56–57, even opines that it is almost harder to harmonize Paul with Paul than with the flatter portrait in Acts! For differences even between Romans and Galatians, cf., e.g., T. H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 43–46.

¹²² Cf. G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), e.g., 234, 348.

¹²³ See Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 205–6; cf. also different sources in Pelling, *Texts*, 21, 54.

¹²⁴ See T. Hillard, A. Nobbs, and B. Winter, “Acts and the Pauline Corpus, I: Ancient Literary Parallels,” pages 183–213 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*; cf. B. W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), xiv.

¹²⁵ Von Harnack, *Acts*, 264–74; cf. M. D. Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 223.

- Peter undertook journeys for his mission (Acts 9; Gal 2:7–8, 11).
- The Lord's brothers were a group alongside the Twelve (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5).
- Barnabas was an apostle, additional to the Twelve, and Paul's early coworker (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:5–6; Gal 2:1).
- Mark is connected closely with Barnabas (Acts 15:37–39; Col 4:10).
- Paul was converted near Damascus by a revelation of the Lord (Gal 1:12, 17; 1 Cor 15:8).
- Paul escaped Damascus in a basket from the wall (Acts 9:24–25; 2 Cor 11:32).
- Paul ministered in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28–29; 23:11; Rom 15:19).
- Silas and (subordinately) Timothy were Paul's companions and were involved with him in founding churches in Thessalonica and Corinth (Acts 15:40ff.; 16:1ff.; 17:1–9; 18:1–5; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 2 Cor 1:19).
- They faced hostility in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5–9; 1 Thess 1:6–7; 2:14).
- Paul began the Corinthian mission before Silas and Timothy arrived (Acts 18:1–4; 1 Thess 3:1, 6).
- He ministered briefly in Athens en route (Acts 17:15–34; 1 Thess 3:1).
- He earned his living in Corinth (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12; 9:6).
- One notable early convert in Corinth was named Crispus (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14).
- Apollos's Corinthian ministry followed Paul's and was compatible (Acts 18:24–28; 1 Cor 1:12).

Likewise, others demonstrate that the sequence of events in Acts fits our limited external sources for Pauline chronology fairly well.¹²⁶

- Persecution (Gal 1:13–14; cf. Acts 9)
- Conversion (Gal 1:15–17a; cf. Acts 9)
- To Arabia (Gal 1:17b; not in Acts)
- To Damascus (Gal 1:17c; cf. Acts 9)
- To Jerusalem (Gal 1:18–19; cf. Acts 9)
- To Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21; cf. Acts 11:25)
- To Jerusalem after fourteen years (Gal 2:1–10; Acts 15:2–29)
- Antioch (Gal 2:11; Acts 15:30–35)
- To Philippi (1 Thess 2:1–2; Phil 4:15–16; cf. Acts 16)

¹²⁶ T. H. Campbell, "Paul's 'Missionary Journeys' as Reflected in His Letters," *JBL* 74 (2, 1955): 80–87, here 81–84, 87; Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 202–6.

- To Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:1–2; cf. Acts 17)
- To Athens (1 Thess 3:1–3; cf. Acts 17)
- To Corinth (2 Cor 11:7–9; cf. Acts 18)
- To Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8–9; cf. Acts 19)
- To Troas (2 Cor 2:12; not in Acts)
- To Macedonia (2 Cor 2:13; 8–9; cf. Acts 20)
- To Corinth (2 Cor 9:4; 7:5; cf. Acts 20:2b–3)
- To Jerusalem (Rom 15:22–25; cf. Acts 21)
- To Rome (Rom 15:22–25; cf. Acts 28)

No novel known to us in antiquity betrays such detailed correspondences with external, incidental information. Moreover, no ancient author would have worked so hard to extract such information from occasional documents, then failed to cite them.¹²⁷

We may correlate many other events in Acts with Paul's letters, despite differences in details. For example, Luke is extremely well informed about Paul's immediate circle. Despite the strange omission of Titus, Luke knows of Peter, John, James, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Aquila and Priscilla; as well as some of the less prominent characters such as Mark (Acts 12:12; Col 4:10; Phlm 24); Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Col 4:10; Phlm 24); Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7); Sopater (Acts 20:4; Sosipater in Rom 16:21); Crispus (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14); and Trophimus (Acts 20:4; 21:29; cf. 2 Tim 4:20).

The reader may also note comparison charts in the commentary at Acts 9:3–6 (with various passages); Acts 9:23–30 (with 2 Cor 11:32–33; Gal 1:18–19); Acts 15:6–22 (with Gal 2:1–10); and Acts 17:1–9 (with 1 Thessalonians).¹²⁸

THE FINAL QUARTER OF ACTS: PAUL IN ROMAN CUSTODY

Not only do Paul's letters roughly match his itinerary in Acts; even some of his travel plans (though not collected in a single letter) do. Paul plans to visit Macedonia (1 Cor 16:5), then Achaia (1 Cor 16:5–6; cf. 4:18–21), Judea (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 1:16) and finally Rome (Rom 1:11–13; 15:23–25;

¹²⁷ If Luke used them but then "suppressed" them by silence, as Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 54, has suggested, why not also suppress the version of Paul's ministry (including this itinerary) they contained?

¹²⁸ Others have suggested even more detailed correspondences for some of these passages; see, e.g., Riesner, *Early Period*, 366–67.

cf. 2 Cor 10:16). Luke reports that precise planned sequence (Acts 19:21). In Paul's letters, he expected trouble in Judea (Rom 15:31) and we next meet him in Roman custody (e.g., Phil 1:13; Phlm 1, 9). Acts fills an important lacuna between the letters.

Why would Paul be in Roman custody? Roman administrators were normally too busy to go around arresting people without either catching them in a subversive act or receiving accusations from locals. Yet local accusers probably would not have gently handed Paul over to Romans on the charge of violating the temple; that was a capital charge that Jews were normally allowed to avenge directly, if the charge could be verified.¹²⁹ Moreover, Luke would not have missed the opportunity to parallel Paul and Jesus if the Sanhedrin arrested Paul and handed him over to the governor (cf. 24:6). A mob scene like Luke describes in his "we" narrative is therefore plausible. While it makes for good adventure, it also supports the charges of stirring riots (24:5) that Luke is at pains to refute in his own narratives by blaming Paul's enemies. Luke would hardly invent a situation that could be construed as supporting the very charges for which he frames his apologetic narrative!¹³⁰

Roman citizens would have been sent to Rome for trial more frequently than other persons; thus later Pliny sent detained Roman-citizen Christians to Rome for trial, instead of simply executing them as he did the others.¹³¹ In principle, Festus could have simply sent Paul to Rome even without an appeal; but such an approach would fail to explain the coincidence between Paul's destination in Rome while in Roman custody and his explicit earlier hope to visit Rome after Jerusalem (Rom 15:23–28). This "coincidence" more readily supports the thesis that Paul may have had something to do with his Roman destination (albeit with the governor's cooperation), just as depicted in Luke's narrative (Acts 25:10–11).

A. N. Sherwin-White, the one Roman historian who has written on the matter extensively and with particular expertise, has adequately demonstrated the legal accuracy of Luke's accounts of Paul's trials, sufficiently challenging the unwarranted skepticism of Haenchen and others.¹³² Although historians made up some speeches, summaries of trial speeches

¹²⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.417; *War* 5.194; 6.125–26; *OGIS* 598; *CIJ* 1400.

¹³⁰ See Keener, "Paul and Sedition."

¹³¹ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.3–4.

¹³² Sherwin-White, *Society*, 48–70; idem, "The Trial of Christ," pages 97–116 in *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 101.

were preserved in public record and appear comparable to those in Acts 24–26.¹³³ The argumentation of these speeches is also compelling forensic rhetoric.¹³⁴

SPEECHES IN ACTS

We have noted the importance of rhetoric to historiography; it was in speeches, however, that historians displayed their rhetorical skills most freely.¹³⁵

Once we have classified Acts as a work of ancient historiography, the speeches require special attention, because ancient history-writing practice diverges sharply from its modern descendant here. Historians typically fleshed out speech reports (and could also compose them, provided they were appropriate to the occasion).¹³⁶ Ancients could either adapt existing sources or completely invent speeches, and one cannot predict, based simply on historical genre, which practice characterizes the speeches of a given author or relates to a given speech within an author.¹³⁷ This observation raises questions for our study: to what extent has Luke followed this typical historiographic practice of his day? Moreover, in light of other historians' use of speeches, what is the purpose and function of speeches in Acts?

Despite some overarching rhetorical principles (such as typical forensic arguments in the defense speeches), Luke's speech material is not as rhetorically sophisticated as we would expect in elite historians. His speeches are much more compact, suiting the one-volume character of his work. Nevertheless, his speeches consume a high proportion of his narrative,¹³⁸ befitting works of history (but perhaps more than usual even

¹³³ B. W. Winter, "Official Proceedings and the Forensic Speeches in Acts 24–26," pages 305–36 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*, 307 n. 7.

¹³⁴ See Keener, "Rhetorical Techniques."

¹³⁵ See, e.g., F. W. Walbank, *Speeches in Greek Historians* (J. L. Myres Memorial Lecture 3; Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 1. On those in Acts, see esp. Soards, *Speeches*; Padilla, *Speeches*.

¹³⁶ Rhetorical expectations compelled elite historians to rewrite even existing speeches.

¹³⁷ The exceptions are speeches for which there were no surviving witnesses (clearly invented) or where the writer's sources remain extant.

¹³⁸ A frequent though debated estimate is a quarter of Acts. Whatever the precise parameters for what counts as speeches, the percentage remains high; G. H. R. Horsley, "Speeches and Dialogue in Acts," *NTS* 32 (4, 1986): 609–14 (613) argues that it is higher than in most other historians; but contrast Aune, *Environment*, 124–25.

in histories, because for Luke proclamation is the narrative's chief subject and action).

Scholars propose various reasons for why Acts includes so many speeches. Some point out that speeches function as a narrative filler where (at least in earlier chapters) Luke has less information; others emphasize that they are conventional in histories; still others note the stylistic value of speeches to break up and move the narrative.¹³⁹ Some of Luke's speeches may also serve as apologetic and missionary models for Luke's audience to adapt. Various speeches in Acts may serve various functions.¹⁴⁰

Ancient historians sometimes used speeches to provide continuity to the flow of history, and especially to shed interpretive light on their narratives.¹⁴¹ Luke undoubtedly uses them to keep the focus on the gospel message that his protagonists are proclaiming throughout his account. Old Testament historical writers could employ speeches to introduce or summarize a unit's theme.¹⁴² The frequently recurring themes in Luke's speeches (see discussion below) also suggest that Luke's own theological interests help shape how he reports these speeches.

Speeches were themselves historical events that played a role in history, sometimes as causes of subsequent events.¹⁴³ Given Acts' emphasis on proclamation, the speeches themselves are part of the action and convey the substance of the message whose spread Luke reports.¹⁴⁴ Historians were

¹³⁹ Certainly ancients did use speeches to supply variety to their histories (Diodorus Siculus 20.2.1; cf. Pliny, *Nat. pref.* 12).

¹⁴⁰ Soards, *Speeches*, 9–11.

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., E. Plümacher, *Geschichte und Geschichten: Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte und zu den Johannesakten* (ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker; WUNT 170; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 109–26; idem, "Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte und Dionys von Halikarnass," *NTS* 39 (2, 1993): 161–77; idem, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (SUNT 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 33–38; H. Lindner, "Die Geschichtsauffassung des Flavius Josephus im Bellum judaicum: Gleichzeitig ein Beitrag zur Quellenfrage, Diss., Tübingen 1970," *TLZ* 96 (12, 1971): 953–54; D. L. Balch, "Ἀκριβῶς . . . γράψαι (Luke 1:3): To Write the Full History of God's Receiving All Nations," pages 229–50 in Moessner, *Heritage*, 229–39; cf. also Jubilees in J. C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (CBQMS 18; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 198–99.

¹⁴² See B. S. Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," pages 65–82 in Winter and Clark, *Literary Setting*, 76. Luke, like some hellenistic Jewish historians, may have found models in LXX speeches, such as Josh 23:2–16; 24:2–27; 1 Sam 12:1–25; and perhaps esp. Moses's speeches in Deuteronomy (Soards, *Speeches*, 156, 160).

¹⁴³ C. Gempf, "Public Speaking and Published Accounts," pages 259–303 in Winter and Clark, *Literary Setting*, 261.

¹⁴⁴ See, e.g., J. Ferreira, "The Plan of God and Preaching in Acts," *EvQ* 71 (3, 1999): 209–15.

to focus on features most important to their narrative;¹⁴⁵ for Luke, what matters most is the apostolic witness narrating and explaining the story of Jesus, particularly his resurrection.¹⁴⁶ Although categories overlap, the book's primarily "evangelistic" speeches tend to be deliberative; the book's later defense speeches are forensic (though even there, Paul is not above deliberately seeking conversion, 26:27–29).

Some Compositional Issues

Speeches should be appropriate to their settings,¹⁴⁷ including in histories.¹⁴⁸ A basic compositional exercise was learning to write speeches suited to characters and situations.¹⁴⁹ Despite the unifying themes of the gospel message, Luke usually follows this advice: compare, e.g., Paul's preaching in a synagogue, a farming community, and to the Athenian elite, in Acts 13:16–41; 14:15–17; 17:22–31. Historians sometimes added speeches only in a final draft of their work, so it is not certain that Luke provided the speeches as we have them at the same time as their settings.¹⁵⁰

Ancient historians often supplied opposing speeches to provide plausible contrasting perspectives, a feature less frequent in Acts (see Acts 24:2–21; cf. 5:29–39; 15:5–11; 19:24–27, 35–40). Interrupting speeches was a common literary device, one that appears also in Acts (10:44; 17:32; 22:21–22; 23:1–2; 26:24).¹⁵¹ Yet Luke's speeches differ from those of most historians in that they are merely synopses. One might compare the rare historian Pompeius Trogus, who disapproved of providing full speeches for historical characters;¹⁵² yet Luke, unlike Trogus, provides his summaries in direct speech. In any case, Luke could not afford the space in

¹⁴⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 13–17.

¹⁴⁶ Such preaching was central to Paul's ministry (Rom 15:18–20; 1 Cor 2:1–4; Gal 4:13), though naturally only letters to churches have been preserved.

¹⁴⁷ Cicero, *Fam.* 9.21.1.

¹⁴⁸ Diodorus Siculus 20.1.1–4; 20.2.2; P. E. Satterthwaite, "Acts against the Background of Classical Rhetoric," pages 337–79 in Winter and Clark, *Literary Setting*, 355–56; Licona, *Differences*, 11.

¹⁴⁹ See, e.g., Theon, *Progymn.* ch. 8 (Butts); Demetrius, *On Style* 5.265–66; Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 9 (Ethopoeia), 20–22.

¹⁵⁰ Aune, *Environment*, 127.

¹⁵¹ See D. L. Smith, *The Rhetoric of Interruption: Speech-Making, Turn-Taking, and Rule-Breaking in Luke-Acts and Ancient Greek Narrative* (BZNTW 193; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

¹⁵² Justin, *Epit.* 38.3.11.

a single-volume monograph to include the lengthy speeches reported in multivolume histories.

Historical Authenticity of the Speeches

Whereas modern historians lacking transcripts might recount what is known of an important speech or even consider what sorts of arguments the speaker might have used, ancient historians would offer their best guesses more directly. They *narrated* their speeches, which belonged to their larger narratives: they presented the speech as they thought it would have or should have been. Ancient audiences considered speeches authentic if they were true to the character and the occasion; since verbatim transcripts of speeches were never available (unless occasionally one survived from the speaker), this is all that audiences could normally expect.

Because modern historians frame the questions differently, we additionally want to know the extent to which ancient reconstructions of speeches corresponded to actual speeches given on the occasions narrated. Here the answer depends largely on the ancient author and his sources. Where historians had a rough idea what was said on an occasion, they would usually include that rough idea in their speech. To make the speech as close to the real one as possible, they would then fill it out according to the way speeches were given and what they knew of the character and the occasion. Where historians had reason to believe that speeches must have been given – say by generals before a battle – yet lacked any tradition of the speech, they would compose their best guess, often in the interest of realism. (The extent to which their speech was a good guess or just what the historian wanted to say depended largely on how skillful or inept the historian was as a historian, or on how badly they felt something needed to be said.)

In other words, the historical genre does not guarantee that simply because we have speeches, there was information behind them. Neither, of course, does it always guarantee the opposite. Different historians often gave similar reports of events but quite different speeches, while preserving their basic message.¹⁵³ For example, the respected Roman historian Tacitus rewrites an original speech of the emperor Claudius; it still addresses the same subject, sometimes retaining elements of Claudius's style, but Tacitus,

¹⁵³ Cadbury, *Making*, 186–87; H. J. Cadbury, F. J. Foakes Jackson, and K. Lake, “The Greek and Jewish Traditions of Writing History,” *Beginnings of Christianity* 2:7–29, here 13–14.

an orator in his own right, freely rearranges material and offers what he feels is a better version. He preserves Claudius's core but mostly in Tacitus's words.¹⁵⁴ Tacitus provides speeches based on information where he had it, and his best guesses where he did not.¹⁵⁵

This was what ancient audiences expected.¹⁵⁶ Josephus reports a well-known speech from 1 Maccabees differently from that well-known source,¹⁵⁷ and even composes speeches for the same occasion differently in his different works!¹⁵⁸ He invents an elaborate but improbably hellenistic speech for a Judean nationalist, a speech with barely any surviving potential witnesses.¹⁵⁹ Turning his sources into acceptable hellenistic history, Josephus composes speeches for scenes in the Pentateuch

¹⁵⁴ See, e.g., Walbank, "Speeches," 19; Laistner, *Historians*, 129; E. A. Judge, "The Rhetoric of Inscriptions," pages 807–28 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 819; Gempf, "Speaking," 284.

¹⁵⁵ See esp. Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.24; *Hist.* 1.15–16. Tacitus includes many speeches for which we cannot expect exact words to have been preserved (e.g., *Ann.* 2.71–72, 76, 77; 6.48; 11.7; 12.48; 13.21; 16.22), including private conversation (*Ann.* 4.7, 52, 54, 68–69; 12.65); indirect speech also appears at events where we cannot be certain that scribes would have kept records (e.g., *Ann.* 12.2; 14.53–54, 55–56; 15.51). Even public speeches to the emperor or senate (e.g., *Ann.* 2.33, 37, 38; 3.33–36, 58, 69; 4.34–35, 37–38; 12.6, 37; 14.43–44; 16.28, 31; perhaps 13.42) will not have been preserved verbatim (though the substance would presumably appear in official records). Some speeches are even summaries of what people more generally (rather than an attributed individual) were saying (indirect, but at length, in *Ann.* 3.17, 40; 14.20; 15.59; 16.25; more briefly, *Ann.* 4.64; 16.4, 29). Sometimes, however, sources close to the event may report conversation we would otherwise disregard (*Ann.* 15.63, which Tacitus regards as too well-known to repeat; 15.67, for which Tacitus seems to have exact words though they were not so widely published; cf. possibly *Ann.* 13.20). Probably Tacitus often reports the substance of his sources, even when we suspect that the claims could have arisen originally from gossip or rumor (e.g., *Ann.* 14.9, 59). Tacitus elaborates speeches where contemporary biographers omit them (*Hist.* 1.29–30) or merely mention them (*Hist.* 1.15–16 with Suetonius, *Galba* 18.3; Plutarch, *Galba* 23.2), but sometimes includes the same point as in their summary (Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.83–84 with Plutarch, *Otho* 3.8; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.47–48 with Suetonius, *Otho* 10.2; Plutarch, *Otho* 15.3–17.2; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.37–38 with Suetonius, *Otho* 6.3).

¹⁵⁶ On historians sometimes explicitly disavowing verbatim reports, see further J. Marincola, "Speeches in Classical Historiography," pages 118–32 in Marincola, *Companion*, 120, citing, e.g., Polybius 18.11; Sallust, *Cat.* 50.5; Livy 37.45.11; Arrian, *Anab.* 5.27.1; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.15–16; *Agr.* 29.4, and noting that emphasis on verbatim quotes were rare and dealt with short lines (e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.59.4; 15.67.4).

¹⁵⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 1.279–84 vs. 1 Macc 2:50–68 (Gempf, "Speaking," 290; Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 211).

¹⁵⁸ Herod's speech to soldiers in *Ant.* 15.127–46 vs. *War* 1.373–79 (Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 211).

¹⁵⁹ See T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 80–81; M. Luz, "Eleazar's Second Speech on Masada and Its Literary Precedents," *RMPHil* 126 (1, 1983): 25–43.

where Scripture lacked speeches.¹⁶⁰ Josephus is admittedly an extreme example.¹⁶¹

Diodorus Siculus allowed limited “rhetorical embellishment” in composing speeches for historical works.¹⁶² Those responsible for recording a previous generation’s speeches could omit passages that had been poorly expressed rhetorically (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621). They could also reshape them: a writer praises a sophist who not only “received” disciple-instruction accurately but also “passed it on” eloquently (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621). Some apparently even deleted from and added to predecessors’ speeches as a rhetorical exercise (Pliny, *Ep.* 7.9.5).

Most scholars assume that Luke had the same freedom.¹⁶³ A minority dissent, contending even that NT scholars argue for such free composition by historians only to absolve Luke from the charge of dishonesty.¹⁶⁴ Yet ancient writers were widely aware of this freedom. Thus Dionysius comments on a speech “which Herodotus puts into the mouth of Xerxes” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 41, LCL). Just a few decades after Luke, Pliny, whose standards for historical accuracy are normally high, praises an orator-historian who provides his characters speeches as excellent as his own, though more concisely (Pliny, *Ep.* 1.16.4). Diodorus Siculus opines that there is nothing wrong with historians seeking to display their rhetorical skills in speeches, composing speeches freely where needed, provided they are genuinely appropriate to their setting.¹⁶⁵

What speeches had to convey, when available, was the gist of what was spoken or likely spoken on an occasion: the subject, the basic perspective, results, and whatever else might be known.¹⁶⁶ Historians sought plausible verisimilitude, which often meant drawing on what was in fact known of the occasion, the subject, and the speaker’s style.¹⁶⁷ As one specialist notes,

¹⁶⁰ E.g., *Ant.* 4.25–34, 134–38.

¹⁶¹ Gempf, “Speaking,” 290. Josephus models his twenty-volume *Jewish Antiquities* after the rhetorical historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s twenty volumes of *Roman Antiquities*.

¹⁶² Diodorus Siculus 20.1–2 (note criticisms of excess in 20.1.3–4); Aune, *Environment*, 93; idem, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 449.

¹⁶³ Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 138–85; Plümacher, “Luke as Historian,” 398–99; Johnson, “Luke-Acts,” 409; Talbert, *Acts*, 28–30; cf. Lightfoot, *Acts*, 311.

¹⁶⁴ G. Lüdemann with T. Hall, *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005), 24.

¹⁶⁵ Diodorus Siculus 20.1.2; 20.2.1.

¹⁶⁶ Cadbury, *Making*, 186–87; Laistner, *Historians*, 17; Fornara, *Nature of History*, 154–68; Gempf, “Speaking,” 264, 299.

¹⁶⁷ They might well depend for this on the known claims of earlier historians (whose own sources might ultimately be accurate or themselves freely composed).

“in almost every historiographical speech there will have been a mixture of what was actually known and what could be surmised.”¹⁶⁸ Historians thought to have created speeches without knowledge opened themselves up to serious criticism.¹⁶⁹ Some authors apparently do supply very faithful reports of some orators’ speeches.¹⁷⁰

Even where historians had speeches in their sources, good historians were supposed to rewrite all their sources in their own style. Historians like Livy rewrote the speeches in their sources, yet reproduced the basic gist¹⁷¹ (though the speeches in his sources probably involve those sources’ creativity). Those who lacked prior written sources worked to reflect the gist where possible, at least if they followed the more conservative model of Thucydides. Thucydides claims that he did the best he could, based on whatever information he had plus historical imagination, to construct the speech as close to the way it should have been spoken.¹⁷²

Given usual methods of speech composition, Luke would not need to have much prior material to convey the gist. If the Sanhedrin considered the apostles a dangerous social movement yet released them after Gamaliel, a moderate Pharisee, spoke in their defense, Luke can provide a plausible speech that also includes the best-known Judean revolutionary movements (Acts 5:36–37). If Luke knew Paul well enough to know the way he preached on some occasions (cf. Rom 1:19–20; 1 Thess 1:9), he would not need to have Paul’s Areopagus speech firsthand to represent Paul appropriately with a genuinely “Pauline” Areopagus speech (Acts 17:22–31).¹⁷³

Luke certainly is willing to report the gist rather than striving for (or even wishing to appear to be striving for) a verbatim report, as is evident

¹⁶⁸ Marincola, “Speeches,” 121.

¹⁶⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 41; Polybius 12.25a.4–5; 12.25b.1, 4.

¹⁷⁰ Hillard, Nobbs, and Winter, “Corpus,” 212; S. A. Adams, “On Sources and Speeches: Methodological Discussions in Ancient Prose Works and Luke-Acts,” pages 389–411 in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture* (ed. S. Porter and A. W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2013); note both parallels and divergences in Pelling, *Texts*, 62.

¹⁷¹ Fornara, *Nature of History*, 160–61; Gempf, “Speaking,” 283; Marincola, “Speeches,” 129.

¹⁷² Thucydides 1.22.1–2; cf. Polybius 12.25b.1; see G. A. Kennedy, “Historical Survey of Rhetoric,” pages 3–41 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 15; Walbank, “Speeches,” 4; Pelling, *Texts*, 117–18; Marincola, “Speeches,” 121–22; L. Porciani, “The Enigma of Discourse: A View of Thucydides,” pages 328–35 in Marincola, *Companion*, 333–34. He was most read and probably the prime model (B. Croke, “Late Antique Historiography, 250–650 CE,” pages 567–81 in Marincola, *Companion*, 567–68; cf. Marincola, “Speeches,” 123–27).

¹⁷³ Though he does appear to have some additional details; see comment on 17:28.

from occasions where he repeats a report in varied words (e.g., Luke 24:47–49; Acts 1:4–8; 10:4–6, 31–32; 10:14 with 11:8).¹⁷⁴ Acts on occasions may report conversations to which Luke and his sources would not likely have been privy (Acts 25:14–22).

Yet Luke also lacks detailed rhetorical elaboration. Thus Charles Talbert contrasts Luke's speeches with those of most other historians: "The brief speeches in Acts . . . bear no resemblance to the rhetorical compositions of Josephus," which might allow "that some or all of the speeches in Acts are a digest or summary of what was actually said."¹⁷⁵ Luke likely preserved the gist whenever he had this available, like many other historians.¹⁷⁶

We might also wish to distinguish various speeches in Acts according to what Luke would have had available. One might expect someone to have recalled the thrust of a speech on a momentous occasion such as Pentecost, whereas on some other occasions Luke might simply summarize early apostolic preaching themes in general.¹⁷⁷ The eyewitness narrator was present on some occasions (e.g., 20:15–18).¹⁷⁸ As noted before, summaries of trial speeches were preserved in public record and were comparable to those in Acts 24–26.¹⁷⁹

Unity among the Speeches

Clearly the speeches in Acts reflect the work of the single author; because historians often used speeches to voice significant perspectives in their work, the theological unity of these speeches is essential for reconstructing the theology and message of Acts.

Ideally historians were supposed to provide distinctive voices for their various characters. Luke does this to some extent (see, e.g., "Paulinisms" in Acts 9:20; 13:38–39); even Paul's speeches in Acts genuinely comport well

¹⁷⁴ He is clear that he offers only summaries (Luke 3:18; Acts 2:40), as was usual (Xenophon, *Apol.* 22; Musonius Rufus 7, p. 58.29–30; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.20.7; cf. Van der Horst, "Parallels to Acts," 57).

¹⁷⁵ Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 211–12; cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 41. On page 211 Talbert also notes Polybius's complaint about Timaeus (Polybius 12.24–25).

¹⁷⁶ With, e.g., Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching*, 17–19; Dunn, *Acts*, xvii–xviii.

¹⁷⁷ For discussion of memories within living memory, cf. Keener, *Christobiography*, 369–496; E. Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* (London: SPCK, 2013).

¹⁷⁸ Paulinisms pervade Acts 20:18–35; see, e.g., Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 117; esp. Walton, *Leadership*, 140–85.

¹⁷⁹ Winter, "Official Proceedings," 307 n. 7.

with the Paul of the letters by the standards of ancient historical writing,¹⁸⁰ displaying knowledge about authentic Pauline preaching.

Some find Semitisms and elements of “primitive christology” in early speeches; others deem such arguments subjective. Plainly, though, some elements of the earliest preaching differ from the emphases that pervade most of our final NT corpus.¹⁸¹ Such features do not imply that Luke has transcripts from those occasions, but they do suggest that he knew and preserved information about early apostolic preaching.

Luke makes no attempt to conceal his speeches’ stylistic unity; compare simply the obvious, opening addresses of speeches in Acts, most of which in Greek include *andres* (“men”) or even *andres, adelphoi* (“men, brothers”), regardless of the speaker (1:16; 2:29, 37; 7:2, 26; 13:15, 26, 38; 15:7, 13; 22:1; 23:1, 6; 28:17). Still, many other ancient historians also lacked significant stylistic divergence in their speeches.¹⁸² Even Polybius repeats many themes in speeches by different figures, probably in part because some of these themes were common themes in speeches on issues relevant to the period in question.¹⁸³

The narrative element of some speeches rehearses the story of Israel, but also at times the outline of the gospel story also found in Luke (e.g., Acts 10:37–42). The evangelistic message in the speeches often reflects common themes that recur in the preaching of diverse speakers, showing that, as Luke saw it, there were common elements in the preaching of leading figures in the early Christian mission.

Even apart from Acts, Paul plainly shared the same basic kerygma as the Twelve, despite their differing target audiences (1 Cor 15:1–8, esp. 11; Gal 2:7–8). Although Paul provides us no explicit examples of evangelistic preaching to his own people, Acts’ evangelistic speeches to gentiles (14:15–17; 17:22–31) follow a pattern attested in 1 Thess 1:9–10.

¹⁸⁰ See, e.g., K. Haacker, *The Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 143–44; A. D. Baum, “Paulinismen in den Missionsreden des lukanischen Paulus: Zur inhaltlichen Authentizität der *oratio recta* in der Apostelgeschichte,” *ETL* 82 (4, 2006): 405–36, esp. 414–35.

¹⁸¹ See fuller discussion in W. L. Knox, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 75–78.

¹⁸² W. J. McCoy, “In the Shadow of Thucydides,” pages 3–22 in Witherington, *History, Literature, and Society*, 15–16; Aune, *Environment*, 126; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 130–31; D. B. Wharton, “Tacitus’ Tiberius: The State of the Evidence for the Emperor’s *Ipsissima Verba* in the *Annals*,” *AJP* 118 (1, 1997): 119–25.

¹⁸³ So Walbank, “Speeches,” 13–15.

Yet despite similarities with other New Testament documents, the apologetic themes and the ways the speeches develop them reflect more similarity among the speeches themselves than with literature outside Luke-Acts. This suggests that Luke at least pared the preaching down to elements most relevant to his story. These speeches repeat key themes that Luke wishes to emphasize: (1) the christological kerygma; (2) the resurrection, especially of Jesus; (3) repentance and/or forgiveness; (4) “the universal significance of God’s salvation”; and sometimes (5) the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁴ Although ancient composition valued repetition to highlight key issues,¹⁸⁵ it also valued variation in formulation.¹⁸⁶ Luke is more committed to theological clarity than to rhetorical fashion.

SIGNS REPORTS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

If speeches comprise perhaps a quarter of Acts, accounts of healings, miraculous escapes, and exorcisms comprise perhaps one-fifth. If the speeches present a modern historiographic problem for one reason, the signs do so for a different one.

Some modern Western scholars rule out the propriety of such reports in factual documents, on the premise that historiography can deal only with human and not divine causes. The limitation of history to human causes seems a legitimate matter of debate (natural disasters, for example, may not be human causes but are not easily extricated from historical accounts). Members of an academic guild have the right to debate and define the appropriate contours of their discipline as they wish. But while the divine causation of events in Acts is a theological question, the events’ occurrence, at least, is a historical one.

The same may be said for other paranormal reports from antiquity. Ancient historians often reported prodigies or omens;¹⁸⁷ Livy provides

¹⁸⁴ Soards, *Speeches*, 203–4. Luke’s speakers share his kerygmatic language; see C. R. Holladay, “Acts as Kerygma λαλεῖν τὸν λόγον,” *NTS* 63 (2, 2017): 153–82.

¹⁸⁵ Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.137.

¹⁸⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 17; Fronto, *Speeches* 4–6.

¹⁸⁷ Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.43, 64; 14.32; 15.22, 47; 16.13; Suetonius, *Jul.* 81.3; Arrian, *Alex.* 4.15.7–8; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 1.9.83; 2.5.36; 2.10.68; 4.1.4. See further Keener, *Acts*, 1:344–50; idem, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 37, 80–82, 87–96; Squires, *Plan*, 78–84, 102; C. Edwards, “Introduction,” pages vii–xxx in *Suetonius: Lives of the Caesars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xviii–ix; Becker, *Birth*, 112.

annual reports,¹⁸⁸ which he takes from official reports that derive from popular claims.¹⁸⁹ Scholars skeptical of some of these reports¹⁹⁰ do not for that reason discount their presence in Livy's sources or dismiss his work's historical value.

While evidence for any particular cure in antiquity may be limited (often to the single report that we have of it), that people are often cured in settings of religious expectation is not simply possible but overwhelmingly demonstrable. David Friedrich Strauss was skeptical of dramatic healing claims in the New Testament, preferring the idea that such stories developed through a process of legendary accretion.¹⁹¹ Yet a friend of Strauss experienced such a recovery in a religious context, a recovery that Strauss dismissed as psychosomatic but could not attribute to legendary development.¹⁹²

Strauss and his contemporaries were influenced by the prevailing philosophy of David Hume, whose approach to miracles in turn restated arguments from radical deists.¹⁹³ Against Hume's own empirical epistemology, he constructed a deductive argument meant to rule out acceptance of miracle claims from the start. In the first half of his essay, Hume contended that miracles were violations of nature and as such were never to be believed. Many of his contemporaries found the argument unimpressive; theists viewed divine activity as "violating" nature no more than human activity did, and most English Enlightenment scientists of his day accepted the activity of a creator as compatible with and not subject to laws of nature. Hume's approach to laws of nature also differs considerably from our understanding of such laws today.

But Hume's argument regarding miracles as violations of natural law depends on the second half of his essay, in which he argues that uniform

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Livy 21.62.1–5; 24.10.6–11; 24.44.8; 25.7.7–9; 26.23.4–5; 27.4.11–14; 27.11.2–5; 27.37.1–6; 29.14.2; 32.8.2; 33.26.7–8; 34.45.6–7; 35.9.2–4; 35.21.3–6; 36.37.2–3; 40.45.1–4; 41.13.1–2; 41.21.12–13; 42.2.4–5; 43.13.3–6; 45.16.5.

¹⁸⁹ See Livy 21.62.1; 24.10.6; 27.37.2; 29.14.2.

¹⁹⁰ Modern readers can explain some of these naturalistically; see, e.g., Livy 21.62.5; 27.11.2–3; 27.37.1–4; 29.14.3; 32.1.10–12; 32.8.2–3; 35.9.2–4.

¹⁹¹ Strauss dated the Gospels implausibly late to maintain his thesis. Modern memory theory challenges Strauss's approach; see Schwartz, "Smoke," 29–30.

¹⁹² See D. Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt, Life and Work: A New Biography* (trans. M. Ledford; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 92–94, 222–23. Strauss did admit contemporary parallels to possession accounts (T. Fabisiak, *The "Nocturnal Side of Science" in David Friedrich Strauss's Life of Jesus Critically Examined* [Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2015]).

¹⁹³ See R. M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles: From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1981), e.g., 9–10, 70–95, 141.

human experience makes belief in miracles irrational. Subsequent philosophers have underlined the circularity in his argument: witnesses who claim miracles are never credible because they violate uniform human experience, which is uniform because we have no credible claims for miracles. From a variety of angles, modern philosophers of religion have challenged Hume's essay on miracles, in one case even denouncing it as Hume's "abject argument."¹⁹⁴

Hume rules out a priori any credible eyewitness claims from nonwestern cultures, which he deems "ignorant and barbarous."¹⁹⁵ He also rules out claims from witnesses if they are uneducated or lack status to risk. His treatment of a remaining report is instructive. He notes that the healing of Blaise Pascal's niece, Margu rite Perrier, was public, organic, and medically documented; then he simply dismisses it as unbelievable.¹⁹⁶

Healings in Religious Contexts

However we explain miracle claims theologically, dramatic cures in religious contexts do not require legendary accretion but can often stem from firsthand witnesses, sometimes (today) with medical documentation. The a priori denial of historical plausibility to Luke's accounts of healings, therefore, is unfounded.

Scholars report the pervasiveness of anomalous experiences associated with religious activity.¹⁹⁷ Healing (cf. Acts 3:6–10; 5:15; 8:7; 9:17, 33–34,

¹⁹⁴ See, e.g., J. Houston, *Reported Miracles: A Critique of Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); D. Johnson, *Hume, Holism, and Miracles* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); J. Earman, "Bayes, Hume, and Miracles," *FPhil* 10 (3, 1993): 293–310; idem, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); idem, "Bayes, Hume, Price, and Miracles," pages 91–109 in *Bayes's Theorem* (ed. R. Swinburne; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); cf. also discussion in Keener, *Miracles*, 107–70.

¹⁹⁵ D. Hume, *Of Miracles* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 36. Hume's language is consistent with his ethnocentrism elsewhere; see C. L. Ten, "Hume's Racism and Miracles," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 36 (2002): 101–7; C. Taliaferro and A. Hendrickson, "Hume's Racism and His Case against the Miraculous," *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2, 2002): 427–41; C. S. Keener, "A Reassessment of Hume's Case against Miracles in Light of Testimony from the Majority World Today," *PRSt* 38 (3, Fall 2011): 289–310.

¹⁹⁶ See R. Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 16.

¹⁹⁷ See, e.g., E. Carde a, S. J. Lynn, and S. Krippner, eds., *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2000); J. McClenon, "The Experiential Foundations of Shamanic Healing," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 18 (1993): 107–27; idem, *Wondrous Events: Foundations of Religious Belief* (Philadelphia: University of

40; 14:9–10; 19:12; 28:8–9) is common in many traditional religious contexts.¹⁹⁸ Most of the world's cultures also recount experiences indigenously construed as possession by spirits (cf. Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; 19:12–13).¹⁹⁹

One respected survey demonstrated that hundreds of millions of Christians worldwide report witnessing or experiencing divine healing.²⁰⁰ Natural explanations undoubtedly suffice for many of these claims, but

Pennsylvania Press, 1994); idem, *Wondrous Healing: Shamanism, Human Evolution, and the Origin of Religion* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002); idem, "Shamanic Healing, Human Evolution, and the Origin of Religion," *JSSR* 36 (1997): 323–37; J. McClenon and J. Nooney, "Anomalous Experiences Reported by Field Anthropologists: Evaluating Theories Regarding Religion," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 13 (2, 2002): 46–60.

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., L. L. Barnes and S. S. Sered, eds., *Religion and Healing in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); L. L. Barnes and I. Talamantez, eds., *Teaching Religion and Healing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); E. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual: A New Interpretation of African Healing* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); idem, *The Hands Feel It: Healing and Spirit Presence among a Northern Alaskan People* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); idem, *Among the Healers: Stories of Spiritual and Ritual Healing around the World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 39–50, 60–69, 76–82, 93–96, 96–100, 142–46; L. Scherberger, "The Janus-Faced Shaman: The Role of Laughter in Sickness and Healing among the Makushi," *Anthropology and Humanism* 30 (1, 2005): 55–69, here 59–64; and, though overlooked by a couple critics who neglected to survey the table of contents, Keener, *Miracles*, 242–49. In Christian settings, see, e.g., C. G. Brown, ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁹ See, e.g., I. I. Zaretsky, *Bibliography on Spirit Possession and Spirit Mediumship* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967); E. Bourguignon, "Introduction: A Framework for the Comparative Study of Altered States of Consciousness," pages 3–35 in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (ed. E. Bourguignon; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 17–19; idem, "Spirit Possession Belief and Social Structure," pages 17–26 in *The Realm of the Extra-Human: Ideas and Actions* (ed. A. Bharati; The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 18–21; see further idem, "Appendix," pages 359–76 in *Religion, States and Change*; I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1971); V. Crapanzano and V. Garrison, eds., *Case Studies in Spirit Possession* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977); C. A. Ward, "Possession and Exorcism: Psychopathology and Psychotherapy in a Magico-Religious Context," pages 125–44 in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (ed. C. A. Ward; Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 126; J. Boddy, "Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 407–34, here 428–34; H. Behrend and U. Luig, *Spirit Possession, Modernity and Power in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999); M. Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

²⁰⁰ "Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals," Pew Forum Survey, at <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal> (231 pages; accessed Jan. 17, 2018), including not only Pentecostals and charismatics in the nations surveyed but roughly 39 percent of "other Christians" there.

their vast numbers preclude the argument – which probably Hume himself would not offer today – that no respectable eyewitnesses offer such claims.

Not all these reports reflect Christian assumptions. Millions of persons have converted to Christianity, many at great social cost, precisely because of healing experiences that presumably appeared different to them than typical recoveries.²⁰¹ For example, one official source attributed half of Christian conversions in China to such experiences.²⁰² Some studies of healing in indigenous contexts have documented unexpectedly dramatic results.²⁰³

I have personally interviewed scores of people who claim to have witnessed the sorts of healings reported in Acts, including a significant number of witnesses whom I know personally who have claimed to witness resuscitations from death in religious contexts.²⁰⁴ I will not elaborate further because I have addressed these matters further elsewhere.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ See, e.g., H. Yung, “The Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel: Bearing the Witness of the Spirit,” *Mission Studies* 24 (2007): 169–88, here 173–75; M. Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 233; cf. idem, “Miracle Healing and Exorcism in South Indian Pentecostalism,” pages 287–305 in C. G. Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, 298; R. P. Bomann, *Faith in the Barrios: The Pentecostal Poor in Bogotá* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 1999), 62; earlier, and particularly extensively, C. R. De Wet, “Signs and Wonders in Church Growth” (MA thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981).

²⁰² C. Währisch-Oblau, “God Can Make Us Healthy Through and Through: On Prayers for the Sick and the Interpretation of Healing Experiences in Christian Churches in China and African Immigrant Congregations in Germany,” *International Review of Mission* 90 (356–57, 2001): 87–102, here 92–93. Some estimates range as high as 90 percent.

²⁰³ See esp. C. G. Brown et al., “Study of the Therapeutic Effects of Proximal Intercessory Prayer (STEPP) on Auditory and Visual Impairments in Rural Mozambique,” *Southern Medical Journal* 103 (9, Sept. 2010): 864–69. For medical documentation also in the West, see, e.g., R. Gardner, “Miracles of Healing in Anglo-Celtic Northumbria as Recorded by the Venerable Bede and His Contemporaries: A Reappraisal in the Light of Twentieth Century Experience,” *British Medical Journal* 287 (Dec. 24–31, 1983): 1927–33; C. Romez, D. Zaritzky, and J. W. Brown, “Case Report of Gastroparesis Healing: 16 Years of a Chronic Syndrome Resolved after Proximal Intercessory Prayer,” *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* 43 (2019): 289–94.

²⁰⁴ Other Acts scholars also challenge antisupernatural theological prejudices in reading Acts; see, e.g., Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 215–16; Kurz, *Acts*, 378–79; see now also L. T. Johnson, *Miracles: God’s Presence and Power in Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018).

²⁰⁵ Keener, *Miracles*; idem, “Miracle Reports: Perspectives, Analogies, Explanations,” pages 53–65 in *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Historische, literarische und Rezeptionsästhetische Aspekte* (ed. B. Kollmann and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 339; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); idem, “‘The Dead Are Raised’ (Matthew 11:5//Luke 7:22): Resuscitation Accounts in the Gospels and Eyewitness Testimony,” *BBR* 25

Explanations for particular cases of cures include original misdiagnosis,²⁰⁶ the placebo effect,²⁰⁷ and how beliefs affect immune responses.²⁰⁸ Nonwestern approaches, less influenced by the specter of Hume, have often proven more open to supernatural explanations for some cases.²⁰⁹ However one explains such experiences, historians today do report religious cures without concern for their causes,²¹⁰ sometimes deferring judgments about supernatural causation to philosophers and/or theologians.²¹¹

Healings and Historiography

Historians who prescind from pronouncing on divine causes may nevertheless report cures recounted in their sources. Scholars have thus offered a range of historical analogies for discussing early Christian miracle reports, from shamans to Rasputin or Don Pedrito Jaramillo to (more analogously) Simon Kimbangu and other early twentieth-century West African healers.²¹²

(1, 2015): 55–79; idem, “Miracle Reports and the Argument from Analogy,” *BBR* 25 (4, 2015): 475–95.

²⁰⁶ Cf. H. Remus, *Jesus as Healer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 109; R. Downing, *Death and Life in America: Biblical Healing and Biomedicine* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2008), 61.

²⁰⁷ See T. A. Droege, *The Faith Factor in Healing* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991), 15–33; D. A. Matthews with C. Clark, *The Faith Factor: Proof of the Healing Power of Prayer* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1998), 179–81; H. Benson, *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 34, 36–37, 45, 107–10, 117; Remus, *Healer*, 109–13.

²⁰⁸ See, e.g., J. J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000); cf. S. M. Greenfield, *Spirits with Scalpels: The Cultural Biology of Religious Healing in Brazil* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008).

²⁰⁹ E.g., González, *Acts*, 84–85; L. I. Martell-Otero, “Of Satos and Saints: Salvation from the Periphery,” *Perspectivas: Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series* 4 (Summer 2001): 7–33 (31–32); H. Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum, 1997), 7.

²¹⁰ E.g., A. Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); J. Opp, *The Lord for the Body: Religion, Medicine, and Protestant Faith Healing in Canada, 1880–1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

²¹¹ MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 24.

²¹² J. Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 32–40; P. F. Craffert, “Crossan’s Historical Jesus as Healer, Exorcist, and Miracle Worker,” *R&T* 10 (3–4, 2003): 243–66; M. J. McClymond, *Familiar Stranger: An Introduction to Jesus of Nazareth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 83; E. Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus’s Miracles* (JSNTSup 231; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 357–59; see esp. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 7, 23–24.

Most historical Jesus scholars recognize that, however we explain this phenomenon, Jesus's contemporaries experienced him as a healer and exorcist.²¹³ Early sources are virtually unanimous in this estimate, including Josephus and (later) Jesus's detractors.²¹⁴ Non-Christians also claimed that such experiences continued to accompany some of Jesus's subsequent followers,²¹⁵ and patristic sources claim eyewitness experience of virtually the same range of experiences reported in Acts.²¹⁶ Healing and exorcism are also the leading documented causes of Christian conversion even in the fourth century.²¹⁷ Such observations do not prove that particular claims in Acts are historical, but they should remove any a priori historical prejudice against them.

Whereas Luke does not describe miracles in Corinth, Paul reports these as a dramatic and observable part of his ministry there (2 Cor 12:12). Luke mentions miracles in fewer locations than Paul seems to believe that they

²¹³ For this summary of consensus, see also R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to Grave* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 143–44; B. L. Blackburn, "The Miracles of Jesus," pages 353–94 in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NTTs 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 362; Eve, *Miracles*, 16–17; J. W. Welch, "Miracles, *Maleficium*, and *Maestas* in the Trial of Jesus," pages 349–83 in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 360; J. B. Green, "Healing," *NIDB* 2:755–59 (758); J. D. M. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 670; A. J. Hultgren, "The Miracle Stories in the Gospels: The Continuing Challenge for Interpreters," *WW* 29 (2, Spring 2009): 129–35 (134–35); G. H. Twelftree, "The Message of Jesus I: Miracles, Continuing Controversies," pages 2517–48 in *The Historical Jesus* (vol. 3 of *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*; 4 vols.; ed. T. Holmén and S. E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 2518–19.

²¹⁴ See, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 9.182; G. Vermes, "The Jesus Notice of Josephus Re-examined," *JJS* 38 (1, 1987): 1–10; idem, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1973), 79; H. Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (NovTSup 9; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 156–67.

²¹⁵ See, e.g., R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), 103–17; R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (StPB 37; Jerusalem: Magnes; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 96–97.

²¹⁶ See fuller surveys of ancient Christian healing in R. M. Woolley, *Exorcism and the Healing of the Sick* (London: SPCK, 1932), 13–25; E. Frost, *Christian Healing: A Consideration of the Place of Spiritual Healing in the Church of Today in the Light of the Doctrine and Practice of the Ante-Nicene Church* (London and Oxford: A. R. Mowbray, 1940), 61–110; M. T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity in Ancient Thought and Modern Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 135–99; W. Young, "Miracles in Church History," *Churchman* 102 (2, 1988): 102–21 (106–8); J. A. Kelhoffer, "Ordinary Christians as Miracle Workers in the New Testament and the Second and Third Century Christian Apologists," *BR* 44 (1999): 23–34.

²¹⁷ MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 61–62.

occurred, since the latter seems to believe that miracles happened virtually wherever he preached (Rom 15:18–19). That Paul anticipated noticeable miraculous phenomena in the Christian communities (1 Cor 12:9–10, 28–30; Gal 3:5) distinguishes those communities from other synagogues and religious associations in antiquity (as distinct, say, from temples of Asclepius, where healings were expected).

Several conclusions may be widely agreeable:

1. Most ancients believed that miracles occurred, and many believed that suprahuman activities were evident on a regular basis, with many eyewitness claims to cures.
2. Modern scholars may question the interpretations of such events, yet regard some of them as genuine experiences for those who claim them. (That many others were fraudulent, of course, no scholar in antiquity or today would deny.)
3. The *a priori* modernist assumption that genuine miracles are impossible is a historically and culturally conditioned premise not shared by all intelligent or critical thinkers, and notably not by many nonwestern cultures. Contrary to what appeared to be the case to many intellectuals one or two centuries ago, history does not support a linear evolution of all cultures toward this interpretive grid.
4. Even the vast majority of those who always reject suprahuman interpretations of ancient miracle reports do not uncritically otherwise reject the value of ancient historians who include them.
5. Without prejudice based on one's views regarding the possibility of divine causation, we must recognize that vast numbers of eyewitnesses claim to have witnessed such phenomena, hence many such claims (certainly regarding cures during prayer) can belong even to the eyewitness level of our sources, and need not be attributed to a long process of oral development.

Whether in the end one shares the early Christian worldview concerning signs, it is ethnocentric to simply despise it. And whether in the end one despises it, one cannot objectively expunge from the record the clear evidence that early Christians (and many people since then) believed that they witnessed these phenomena.

Oxford scholar G. B. Caird long ago remarked:

Luke has often been accused of credulity because he has packed his narrative with signs and wonders, but it would be more in keeping with the evidence

to commend him for his faithful reproduction of one of the major constituents of early Christianity. For the Epistles bear their concurrent witness that the preaching of the Gospel was everywhere accompanied by exorcisms and healing and by other forms of miracle . . .²¹⁸

ACTS' DATE

I can merely survey here the much-debated question of Acts' date. The centrist position (70s–80s) boasts the most adherents, and is followed in this commentary. At least until recently, the early date (60s) has ranked second, with dates in the 90s and then the second century (mostly the early second century) following; the last group has, however, grown since recent arguments by Richard Pervo and Joseph Tyson.²¹⁹

The pre-70 date is not the exclusive domain of “conservative” interpreters. E. R. Goodenough, who thinks Luke's portrait of Paul largely fictitious, nevertheless dates the argument of Acts to the early 60s because Luke would need to defend Paul's legacy only in a period when controversy about him remained.²²⁰ (Such controversy, however, may have continued in the 70s.)

Usually scholars arguing for a pre-70 date contend that Acts ends where it does because the events had unfolded only this far at the time of Luke's writing, i.e., c. 62 CE.²²¹ Abrupt endings were, however, fairly common in ancient literature, and did not mean that the writer did not know some events that followed.²²² If Luke is writing a history of early Christian mission, concluding with the heart of his audience's empire may be fitting, even if Rome is merely a proleptic foretaste, like the Jerusalem Pentecost (Acts 2:9–11) and the African court official (8:27), of the message reaching the ends of the earth (1:8).

²¹⁸ G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1955), 64.

²¹⁹ The extensive survey of views in Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 359–63, lists roughly thirty-one supporters for the 60s; forty-eight for the 70s–80s; twenty for the 90s; and eleven for c. 100 or any decade thereafter.

²²⁰ E. R. Goodenough, “The Perspective of Acts,” pages 51–59 in Keck and Martyn, *Studies*, 58.

²²¹ See, e.g., C. Williams, *Acts*, 15, 18–19; A. Mittelstaedt, *Lukas als Historiker: Zur Datierung des lukanischen Doppelwerkes* (TANZ 43; Tübingen: Francke, 2006), 219–21. Earlier, see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.1–8.

²²² See, e.g., Thucydides 8.109.1 (with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 12); Herodian 8.8.8; *LAB* 65:5; Mark 16:8; J. L. Moles, “Time and Space Travel in Luke-Acts,” pages 101–22 in Dupertuis and Penner, *History*, 113; esp. J. L. Magness, *Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1986).

That Luke does not indicate that Jerusalem's destruction is past no more requires a pre-70 date than we would need to date James Joyce's *Ulysses* before World War I because it does not mention it.²²³ Others more plausibly date Luke-Acts after 70 because of Luke's allusions to Jerusalem's destruction. One need not rule out the possibility of predictive prophecy²²⁴ to observe that Luke adds concrete details about the city's destruction to the prophecy of Mark 13 (see esp. Luke 21:20, 24).

The largest group of scholars thus dates Luke between 70 and 90, with a majority of these in the 80s (though I prefer the 70s). F. F. Bruce, who in earlier editions of his Acts commentary argued for a pre-70 date, shifted to a post-70 date in his final edition.²²⁵ Paul's rejection in the temple for association with gentiles (Acts 22:21–22) and his final warning from a judgment context in Isaiah (28:26–27) take on an ironic and tragic dimension if Luke writes after 70. Nevertheless, because Luke's apologetic for Paul would be most relevant in a period when his legacy remained controversial even in the Pauline sphere of the Diaspora, I am inclined toward an earlier date (such as in the 70s) than in the 80s.²²⁶

A date in the 70s or 80s still readily allows for the author to have been a traveling companion of Paul, a view defended by a significant number of Lukan scholars.²²⁷ Because I believe that this is by far the best explanation for the "we" narratives, I believe that all suggested first-century dates are more plausible than later ones.

The most common argument for a date after 90 is Luke's supposed dependence on Josephus. Yet Josephus would not have been very accessible to Luke even in the 90s, and the strongest argument for dependence, Luke's citation of Theudas and Judas, is quite weak. Did Luke ignore most of Josephus and then get wrong the one point where he followed him? The information shared with Josephus was probably widely known, unless we suppose that Josephus was simply making up all his material freely.

Those scholars who date Acts in the second century often allow for the work to be no earlier than its earliest citations; by this standard, however, we might date John's Gospel to the time of Justin Martyr in the mid-second century, even though we have a fragment of John's Gospel from

²²³ Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 337.

²²⁴ I do believe that Q (see Luke 11:50–51; Matt 23:35–36) and Mark 13 predate 70.

²²⁵ Bruce, *Acts*³, 16–17.

²²⁶ See Keener, "Paul and Sedition."

²²⁷ An author with good notes or even a good memory could publish memoirs years after the events described (see, e.g., Xenophon, *Anab.*; Seneca the Elder, *Controv.*).

possibly a generation earlier. Granted, our few fragments of Papias do not note Luke's Gospel, but its nonexistence is quite a leap to argue from this silence.²²⁸ By the very early second century we have patristic quotations of material from Luke's Gospel and, though the allusions are less complete, very probably Acts.²²⁹ Those who date Acts to the second century often date it substantially later (by decades) than Luke, but most scholars still believe that Luke designed his two volumes to be read together.²³⁰

One would not expect a second-century work largely about Paul to neglect themes from Paul's letters that were by then collected. Luke's independence from Matthew is also difficult to explain on a second-century date, when Matthew flourished as the most popular Gospel.²³¹ Luke's pre-Ignatian ecclesiology, his lack of interest in gnosticism, and other factors also militate against a later date.

The numerous incidental corroborations of Acts from external sources would also likely be much fewer were Acts a second-century work (unless Acts depends on a source very much like . . . Acts). Those who date Acts to the second century also cannot regard the author as a companion of Paul; there is less agreement on authorship than on a first-century date, but for discussion of this question, see the "Authorship" section below. If a traveling companion of Paul was, say, thirty when he traveled with Paul c. 50 CE (Acts 16:10), he would be in his early fifties by the early 70s, and in his early sixties by the early 80s (or in his seventies in the 90s, if one dates Acts so late).

AUTHORSHIP

Today almost all scholars acknowledge that Luke and Acts share the same author. On the basis of internal evidence scholars debate whether (with the

²²⁸ Papias's alleged contradiction of Luke also differs from Matthew, which certainly circulated. Justin seems little more interested in Acts than in John, but may echo Acts three times; see Haenchen, *Acts*, 8.

²²⁹ Cf., e.g., Luke 1:35 in Basilides (in Hippolytus, *Her.* 7.14); Luke 6:36 in *1 Clem.* 13.2; Polycarp, *Phil.* 2.3; perhaps 1 Tim 5:18 (unless just a shared logion). The echo of Acts 2:24 in Polycarp, *Phil.* 1.2 (loosed the pangs of death/hades) is quite likely, extant before Polycarp only in Acts (see here esp. K. Berding, *Polycarp and Paul* [VCSup 62; Boston, MA: Brill, 2002], 37–41, 194); note also Jesus's first "coming" in *1 Clem.* 17.1 and Polycarp, *Phil.* 6.3 (which appears in biblical Greek only at Acts 7:52); Acts 10:41 in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.3; Acts 10:42 in Polycarp, *Phil.* 2.1; 2 *Clem.* 1.1; Acts 13:22 in *1 Clem.* 18.1; Acts 20:35 in *1 Clem.* 2.1; 13.1; 46.7; possibly Acts 14:22 in *Barn.* 7.11.

²³⁰ Cf. Acts 1:1; further, e.g., Tannehill, *Acts*; Verheyden, *Unity*.

²³¹ G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 32.

majority) the author is a biblically informed gentile Christian (hence the centrality of the gentile mission) or a (Diaspora) Jewish Christian who was part of the hellenist mission to the gentiles. The range of his geographic knowledge suggests that he was not Judean.

Many scholars, probably still the majority, argue that the author was at least a short-term companion of Paul.²³² A clear majority agree that the “we” material, whether composed by Acts’ author or a source, stems from an eyewitness. When historians include “we” in their histories, they almost always claim to be present at those points, and we do not ordinarily suspect them of lying.²³³ Even less should we expect it of Acts’ author, who consistently minimizes his own role in any action, whose spheres of action are geographically consistent (see esp. Acts 16:10; 20:5), and who fails to cite his presence at particularly pregnant moments such as the empty tomb or Pentecost. I defer fuller discussion of the question to 16:10.

Less important, but worthy of investigation, is the question of who that traveling companion may have been. The companion apparently continues with Paul in his time of custody in Caesarea and Rome. Of possible candidates in Pauline literature who fit this description, Luke the physician (Col 4:14; Phlm 24; cf. 2 Tim 4:11) is the likeliest candidate,²³⁴ and also the one supported by subsequent Christian writers that claimed access to earlier sources no longer available to us. (Because authors could name themselves both in the first and third person, one might also consider Timothy, though it would be surprising for early Christians to have forgotten him as an author.)

Classicists normally start with the external evidence, usually the most concrete evidence available. If the author was a companion of Paul, the tradition that this companion was “Luke” is reasonable.²³⁵ This tradition appears in the anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke and in the Muratorian

²³² See, e.g., C. Williams, *Acts*, 22–30; Dunn, *Acts*, x; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 50; Chance, *Acts*, 4; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 66, 82; earlier, e.g., Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 135–37; A. D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Z. Stewart; 2 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 827. Those who argue against the author having been a companion of Paul generally stress especially the differences between Paul’s letters and the portrayal of Paul in Acts (e.g., Barrett, *Acts*, xxvii–xxx; Marguerat, *Actes*, 19). See my response below in the section “Comparisons with Paul”; also, e.g., J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX)* (AB 28; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 47–51.

²³³ See the often-cited Nock, *Essays*, 827–28, skeptical of a fictitious “we.”

²³⁴ Aristarchus is distinguished from the author at Acts 20:4–5; 27:2 (cf. also 19:29); Demas may not have persevered (cf. 2 Tim 4:10). Were Titus the author, the “we” probably should have appeared in Acts 15:1–30 (cf. Gal 2:1–3).

²³⁵ See Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 35–41; idem, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 1–26.

Canon, although the dates of these works are disputed.²³⁶ Of more certain date, Irenaeus (c. 180 CE) also attributes Acts to Luke.²³⁷ The same tradition appears in Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and others.²³⁸ Also significantly, p⁷⁵ (175–225 CE) calls the Gospel, the “Gospel According to Luke.”²³⁹ The titles of the four Gospels each seem to preserve earlier tradition, being themselves early enough and accepted enough to have been unanimous and unchallenged throughout the ancient church.²⁴⁰

One of the least likely lapses in early Christian memory would be the name of the author of two major works (Luke and Acts), especially the widely circulated Gospel. Our earliest external evidence unanimously supports Luke’s authorship. Given his relative obscurity, this is probably not coincidence. No one would have invented a nonapostle and noneyewitness of Jesus’s ministry; indeed, Irenaeus can be construed as sounding almost defensive about Luke as the author! Moreover, it is unlikely that a work the size of a Gospel would have circulated anonymously in the churches;²⁴¹ the dedicatee, Theophilus, surely knew the work’s author, as would the rest of the first audience, information probably passed on by those who respected Luke’s volumes.

One traditional argument for Lukan authorship carries minimal weight. Some identify medical language in Luke-Acts, consistent with the author being a physician (Col 4:14).²⁴² But there were diverse schools of medical thought in antiquity, and most of the alleged medical terms in Luke-Acts are widely attested outside medicine, such as in other historians or in the Septuagint. Nothing in Luke-Acts therefore demonstrates that its author was a physician. Still, its language at least proves *consistent* with authorship

²³⁶ Also in a minor textual variant at Acts 20:13, also of uncertain date.

²³⁷ *Her.* 3.1.1; 3.13.3; 3.14.1. Irenaeus also appeals to the “we” narrative for Luke as Paul’s companion in 3.1.1; 3.14.1.

²³⁸ Clement, *Strom.* 5.12; Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2; Origen, *apud Eusebius Hist. eccl.* 6.25 (in C. Williams, *Acts*, 2).

²³⁹ Witherington, *Acts*, 56.

²⁴⁰ M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 81–82; S. Gathercole, “The Alleged Anonymity of the Canonical Gospels,” *JTS* 69 (2, 2018): 447–76 (460–76). Since all four titles were probably bestowed simultaneously, given their identical form, they were probably composed to circulate with the collection of four Gospels, presumably before both Irenaeus and Tatian in their different regions and definitely before the late second-century superscription of p⁶⁶.

²⁴¹ Although some ancient works name the author in the preface, others did not, since the recipients typically knew the author and other features, such as titles, were often on the outside of the scroll. See now esp. Gathercole, “Anonymity,” 447–60.

²⁴² W. K. Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1882).

by a physician.²⁴³ The ancient world had no “professional historians” but merely intellectuals who wrote histories.²⁴⁴ Physicians were known among the intelligent professions,²⁴⁵ and at least some were rhetorically skilled.²⁴⁶

ACTS' AUDIENCE

Luke undoubtedly would have wished for as wide an audience as possible,²⁴⁷ including, could he have imagined it, us. Nevertheless, Luke writes in Greek and takes for granted a range of cultural knowledge, including Aegean geography and the Greek version of the Scriptures. What was his target audience?²⁴⁸

Luke's ideal audience was probably on average of higher education than many others, with a wide knowledge of the north Aegean Greek culture and familiarity with the Septuagint. This observation probably also supports the likelihood that they were more economically stable than, say, rural peasants in Galilee or Egypt, and some were probably better off than the average artisan (Theophilus perhaps much better).

Luke dedicates his work to a “most excellent” Theophilus (Luke 1:3), a title that suggests that Theophilus is probably a person of prestige and rank in society (cf. Acts 26:25). While Theophilus is an explicit “narratee,” no ancient audience would assume that the dedicatee was necessarily socially *representative* of Luke's ideal audience. One might dedicate a work to a patron who would be of higher rank than the clients who would have heard

²⁴³ See the much more nuanced case of A. Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Texts* (WUNT 2.164; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), esp. 335.

²⁴⁴ S. Rebenich, “Historical Prose,” pages 265–337 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 289.

²⁴⁵ Diogenes Laertius 6.2.24. Cf. Galen's philosophic orientation in C. Gill, “Galen and the Stoics: Mortal Enemies or Blood Brothers?” *Phronesis* 52 (1, 2007): 88–120; a surgeon historian in Lucian, *Hist.* 16. The physician Ctesias was also a historian, albeit not a very good one (T. S. Brown, *The Greek Historians* [Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973], 78–79).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 323; for Pythagoreans and medicine, see, e.g., Iamblichus, *V.P.* 29.163–64; 34.244.

²⁴⁷ See R. Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

²⁴⁸ Cf. R. A. Burridge, “About People, by People, for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences,” pages 113–46 in *Gospels for All Christians*, 143; S. C. Barton, “Can We Identify the Gospel Audiences?” pages 173–94 in *ibid.*, 194; J. M. Smith, “Genre, Sub-genre and Questions of Audience: A Proposed Typology for Greco-Roman Biography,” *JGRChJ* 4 (2007): 184–216 (210–11); Becker, *Birth*, 46.

the work read, for example, at one of the banquets sponsored by the patron.²⁴⁹

Although his Gospel contains the most sweeping condemnations of accumulating wealth (e.g., Luke 3:11; 12:13–21, 33; 14:33), Luke also emphasizes many people of status following the way (e.g., Luke 8:3; 23:50–51; Acts 13:12; 17:4; 28:7); likewise, he portrays Paul's status as relatively high,²⁵⁰ a point of interest to any ancient hearer but perhaps especially to another person of status. The audience may also appreciate marks of education (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:28; 18:24; 22:3).²⁵¹ Still, we cannot press such observations too far. Even today, groups marginalized from society are often eager to point to isolated high-status members or precedents that show them respectable with the dominant culture, a culture that otherwise tends to dismiss or ignore them.

Luke's ideal audience appears to be urban, Greek, perhaps in officially Romanized cities like Corinth and Philippi, and would be familiar with some measure of education and with public orations, religion, and (at least through banquet lecturers and philosophic orators) some philosophic ideas that circulated in civic assemblies and in the marketplace. If the "we" narrator is also the book's author, he has direct acquaintance with the Macedonian church, and his detailed narrative of the beginning of the Philippian church makes special sense. The primary sphere of special geographic knowledge implicitly shared between author and audience is the urban Aegean region, including Ephesus but especially regarding Macedonia and Achaia.

The question as to whether Luke's audience is largely Jewish or gentile may in one sense be a forced dilemma. By this period the Greek churches included a sizeable number of gentiles; Philippi had never had a large Jewish population to begin with. At the same time, most of these churches grew from synagogues (17:10–12; 18:4–8; 19:8–10) or at least Jewish prayer groups (16:13), and would include a sizeable number of Jewish people and gentile synagogue adherents, who would have necessarily constituted the initial teaching nucleus.

²⁴⁹ Dedications did not obligate the dedicatee in any respect (Nock, *Essays*, 825–26).

²⁵⁰ See, e.g., J. H. Neyrey, "Luke's Social Location of Paul: Cultural Anthropology and the Status of Paul in Acts," pages 251–79 in Witherington, *History, Literature, and Society*.

²⁵¹ V. K. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts," pages 305–32 in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 326. For Paul's status, see especially comment on Acts 22:3; also on 16:37; 21:39.

PURPOSES OF ACTS

As date and authorship questions are inseparable, so also are Acts' purposes and message. One purpose that is explicit in Luke's prologues is the communication of historical information (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1), a purpose inseparable from the work's genre (see discussion above). But as already noted, ancient works of history had functions beyond simply communicating information for information's sake.

Luke-Acts includes multiple themes, and it is not a foregone conclusion that all these emphases represent the same purpose. Rarely do writers today, or did writers then, have only a single, narrow agenda in mind when producing a literary work; even Paul's letters to particular congregations often treat multiple issues in the congregations, despite some pervasive themes (e.g., 1 Corinthians; 1 Thessalonians).

Against some, Acts' apologetic is probably to equip believers in their responses (cf. Luke 21:12–15; 1 Pet 3:15), not primarily to evangelize non-believers directly. As already noted, many historians from cultural minorities wrote apologetically; their works, however, probably appealed especially to their own constituencies. Luke authored his two-volume work not primarily for outsiders, but to legitimate and confirm faith (Luke 1:4).

Nevertheless, Luke, committed to the Pauline Diaspora mission, has a major interest in honoring this mission and likely also in providing models for continuing mission. As already noted, ancient historians provided examples, positive and negative role models (cf. also 1 Cor 10:11; Luke 22:27; Acts 20:35). The apologetic material may provide both material and a model for how its readers should respond to persecutors, including the Roman government when on trial. Christians ask from Rome only what various other peoples' cults already received: toleration, or, in today's language, religious freedom.

Jesus (in the Gospel) and the evangelizers and church planters in Acts provide a missiological model for Luke's audience for continuing the task. Thus Luke emphasizes not only that the Spirit is given for mission (Acts 1:8) but also that the Spirit available to all subsequent generations of believers as well as the first (2:38–39). Acts' conclusion is open-ended. Luke thus encourages his audience to expect continuing preaching, church planting, signs and wonders, persecution, and the growth of the Way in the face of opposition.

Acts as Apologetic

Scholars generally regard Luke-Acts as at least partly an apologetic work.²⁵² Acts contains numerous apologetic speeches (esp. 7:2–53; 22:3–21; 24:10–21; 26:2–29); intellectual dialogue also demonstrates the potential respectability of the movement's best arguments (17:32–34; 19:9–10). Most significantly, its final quarter addresses Paul in custody, in parallel with Jesus's passion. Given the dominance of Jewish objections, some argue that Acts' apologetic audience seems primarily Jewish.²⁵³

But Luke would need to address such objections not only because of local Jewish communities, but also because of the effects of such accusations on Christians' standing with regard to Rome. An apology to Rome may better account for the parallel with Jesus's trial²⁵⁴ and the regular declarations of Paul's innocence by officials.²⁵⁵ Although he reports Jesus's abuse by Jewish soldiers, perhaps the Levite temple police (Luke 22:63–65; 23:11), he omits his source's abuse of Jesus by the *Roman* soldiers (Luke 23:25–26 omits Mk 15:16–20).²⁵⁶

Rome recognized Judaism's rights as an ancient, ethnic religion, and thus allowed sabbath gatherings, exclusive sacrifice to Israel's God, and so forth. Did uncircumcised gentile Christians merit the same toleration? By clearly grounding the Diaspora churches' story in Jesus's story, and Jesus's story in the story of Israel, Luke both articulates his view of salvation history and also contends for his movement's legitimacy as an ancient

²⁵² E.g., Hengel, *Acts and History*, 60; F. F. Bruce, "Paul's Apologetic and the Purpose of Acts," *BJRL* 69 (1986–87): 379–93.

²⁵³ For Acts as apologetic, see Alexander, *Context*, 183–206.

²⁵⁴ S. Légasse, "L'apologétique à l'égard de Rome dans le process de Paul: Actes 21, 27–26, 32," *RSR* 69 (2, 1981): 249–55 (254). Others also emphasize the parallel between Jesus's passion and Acts 22–26 (J.-N. Aletti, "Testimoni del Risorto: Spirito Santo e testimonianza negli Atti degli apostoli," *Rivista di teologia dell'evangelizzazione* 2 [4, 1998]: 287–98, though the argument about the absence of mention of the Spirit seems questionable; see esp. H. Omerzu, "Das traditionsgeschichtliche Verhältnis der Begegnungen von Jesus mit Herodes Antipas und Paulus mit Agrippa II," *SNTSU* 28 [2003]: 121–45). E. Heusler, *Kapitalprozesse im lukanischen Doppelwerk: Die Verfahren gegen Jesus und Paulus in exegetischer und rechtshistorischer Analyse* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000), contends that Luke adapted Mark's passion narrative to more closely resemble Roman procedures, resembling Acts.

²⁵⁵ Légasse, "L'apologétique," 253.

²⁵⁶ Such abuse was undoubtedly commonplace (cf. R. F. Brown, *Death*, 877). Some scholars (esp. P. W. Walaskay, "And So We Came to Rome": *The Political Perspective of St Luke* [SNTSMS 49; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983]) sees Acts as an apology for Rome; Jervell makes a plausible case for it as apologetic toward Judaism; more scholars see it as an apology to Rome or to those who respect its verdicts.

religion. That it is no longer ethnic-specific he can depict positively: Diaspora Jesus-followers still worship one God, but unlike most Judeans they do not circumcise gentiles, a Jewish practice controversial among Romans.²⁵⁷ If Roman magistrates were to accept Christianity as an ethnic religion, a sect within Judaism, Paul's relationship with Judean Judaism could also become an apologetic concern toward Roman law.²⁵⁸ Rome generally accommodated local cults so long as they provided no threat to public order; they preferred to keep all deities well-disposed toward the Roman state. In Rome itself foreign cults remained suspect in some periods,²⁵⁹ but could be regulated and in time accepted.²⁶⁰

Luke carefully avoids reinforcing suspicions of political subversion (cf. Luke 20:22, 25). Luke (Luke 3:12; 5:27–30; 7:29, 34; 15:1; 18:10–13; 19:2) includes more tax-gatherers than Mark (Mk 2:15–16); their fairly positive role may help counter any associations with Judean nationalism epitomized in the revolt of 66–73 CE. Luke 2:1–7 places Jesus's birth in the context of his parents' obedience to Caesar's decree, which involves a tax census also implicitly associated with Judas's revolt (2:2; cf. Acts 5:37). Most of Luke's audience may not have caught the allusion (and modern debates about the chronology of Quirinius tend to obscure it), but contrasts with revolutionaries in Acts 5:36–37 and 21:38 are obvious enough.²⁶¹

More explicitly than in the other Gospels, the expected kingdom involves peace (Luke 1:79; 2:14; 19:38; Acts 10:36; though cf. Luke 12:51), dissociating it further from Jerusalem's revolt (Luke 19:42). Mentions of "Caesar" are hardly incidental. Luke emphasizes that charges of sedition

²⁵⁷ See J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 56–57; comment on 16:20–21.

²⁵⁸ Judaism was respected for its antiquity (cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.1–29, 196, 215–18, 227; 2.1, 154–56, 279, 288; *Ant.* 1.5; 19.283, 290), but probably not technically a *religio licita*, a title first attested in Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.1; see T. Rajak, "Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?" *JRS* 74 (1984): 107–23; R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 91–93; P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 214–17. Later Christians developed the antiquity argument further; see Justin, *1 Apol.* 44; Tertullian, *Apol.* 47.14.

²⁵⁹ See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.35.2; Livy 4.30.9–11; 25.1.11–12; 39.15.2–3, 11; 39.18.9; Valerius Maximus 1.3.1–4; Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.32.2; Jews in Valerius Maximus 1.3.3; comment on Acts 18:2.

²⁶⁰ E.g., Cicero, *Balb.* 24.55; Pliny, *Nat.* 28.4.18.

²⁶¹ Still, one of Jesus's disciples is a "zealot" (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13; more obvious for Greek readers than the Aramaic title in Mark 3:18); whatever that title may have meant originally, it surely carried more revolutionary connotations after 66–70.

against Caesar (Luke 23:2; Acts 17:7; cf. 25:8) are fabrications; Paul proves so confident that he has not dishonored Caesar that he appeals to him for vindication (Acts 25:11; 28:19; cf. 25:12, 21; 26:32; 27:24).

Granted, Luke contrasts Christ with Caesar (Luke 2:1–14), and God’s promised kingdom necessarily challenges Roman hegemony (Dan 2:44). But Luke articulates the present tensions as gently as possible. Apart from worshipping Caesar (cf. Luke 20:25; Acts 12:22–23), from which Jews were already exempt, the ultimate confrontation is primarily future (1:6–7; 3:19–21; Luke 21:25–28, 31), so that proclaiming Jesus as king (Acts 17:7) is not truly seditious. In the earliest imperial period, even Romans looked for a future golden age.

Apologetic for Paul

Writers had long used historical and biographic narratives to defend the legacy of respected figures, whether King David or Socrates.²⁶²

The very amount of space devoted to Paul’s custody (Acts 22–28, plus briefer earlier custodies) indicates this concern.²⁶³ Luke often signals those points he wishes to emphasize by repetition: for example, he underlines the gentile mission by three times repeating the Cornelius narrative (Acts 10–11, 15) and three times repeating the account of the conversion of the apostle to the gentiles (Acts 9, 22, 26). In the same way, he reports three Roman hearings concerning Paul regarding the final custody, none of which supplies any conclusive evidence against him.²⁶⁴

Just as Jesus, the early Christians’ Lord, was executed on the charge of treason against the emperor (as “king of the Jews”; cf. Luke 23:2), so was Paul, the leading figure of the movement’s Diaspora mission, executed in Rome. Yet Rome’s representatives recognized Jesus’s innocence (Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22, 47), and the most noteworthy leader of the Diaspora Christian movement was not only innocent (Acts 23:29; 26:31–32), but himself a Roman citizen (16:37; 22:25–29; 23:27). Their hearings reflected the political demands of a hostile Jerusalem elite (25:9; Luke 23:13, 23), now discredited by the Judean war. Roman officials suspicious of Jewish sedition should look

²⁶² Cf., e.g., C. W. Votaw, “The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies,” *AmJT* 19 (2, Apr. 1915): 217–49 (247); A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography: Four Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 52–53.

²⁶³ Acts may include more trial scenes than the five standard Greek novels put together (S. Schwartz, “The Trial Scenes in the Greek Novels and in Acts,” pages 105–37 in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 118).

²⁶⁴ See Witherington, *Acts*, 73.

not to the Christian followers of a Jewish Messiah but to their accusers! The movement's lack of political influence may have problematized persuading outsiders, but it was the best apologetic available, and from Luke's perspective (as both a Christian and a citizen of the empire) it was the truth.

Against some, Acts is not a legal brief defending Paul; no one composed a historical monograph as a legal brief, although information collected for such purposes could be among its sources. What seems clear is that concerns about Paul's innocence seem to have persisted in Luke's day (cf. Eph 3:13; Phil 1:17, 20; 2 Tim 1:8, 12, 15–16; 4:16). Even during his own day, Paul had some opponents within the Christian movement (Acts 21:21; Rom 3:8; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 2:4; cf. Rom 15:31).

The charge of stirring unrest (Acts 24:5) was a serious one, and Luke takes it so seriously that he both narrates the incidents that could be cited against Paul and evidence that Paul was never the real cause of the trouble.²⁶⁵ Luke would hardly have cited so many incidents to begin with if accusations of stirring unrest did not remain too much of a live issue for him to evade.

Passage	Luke's perspective	Jewish involvement?
9:23–25	Opposition in Damascus	Jewish opposition
13:12	Positive response from the proconsul	Despite a Jewish opponent
13:50	Aristocrats in Pisidian Antioch drove them out (perhaps forgotten by now)	Jewish instigation
14:5	Mob in Iconium	Jewish instigation
14:19	Mob in Lystra nearly killed Paul	Jewish instigation
16:22–23	Beaten in Philippi, but vindicated (16:37–40)	Due to anti-Semitism
17:10	Paul escapes without responding to charges (but these expired once the politarchs left office)	Jewish instigation
17:14	Chased out of Berea	Jewish instigation
17:32–34	Acceptable response in Athens	No trouble from synagogue
18:12–17	Governor rejects the charges against Paul as purely religious	Jewish legal opposition
19:23	The riot in Ephesus	No Jewish instigation, but it embarrasses the Jewish community
21:28	Riot in the Jerusalem temple	Jewish instigation

²⁶⁵ Historically, Paul clearly faced opposition (Rom 15:31; 1 Cor 4:11–13; 2 Cor 1:8–10; 4:8–11; 6:5; 11:23–26; Gal 5:11; 6:12; Eph 3:1; 4:1; Phil 1:14–17; 1 Thess 2:2; 2 Thess 3:1–2; Phlm 9); yet his aim was clearly not destabilizing Roman order (Rom 13:1–7).

Wherever possible, Josephus cites Roman precedents supporting Jewish rights.²⁶⁶ Likewise, wherever Roman officials appear in Acts (apart from corrupt Felix), they are favorable, and the legal precedents positive (18:12–17; cf. 13:12). Roman courts and important officials (people of the kind of status that weighed in Roman courts) exonerate Paul (16:36–39; 18:14–15; 19:37–40)! Luke provides potential precedents against persecuting early Christians as subversives (13:12; 16:38–39; 17:32–34; 19:38–40; 24:20–27; esp. 18:14–15; 26:30–32).

Even so, Luke's historiographic sensitivity does not allow him to paint every official identically, and he cannot suppress some tension (e.g., 4:27; 24:26–27). Moreover, some close calls (17:10) suggest that just behind the surface of Luke's apologetic are serious challenges against Paul; chains, imprisonment, and execution were shameful in the empire, and exonerating Paul was no small task.

For Josephus's apologetic, Tiberius's expulsion of Jews from Rome stemmed from a lone exploiter and the Judean-Roman war from irresponsible governors and a few Jewish bandits. Likewise in Acts, Jewish instigation appears in the majority of instances above where Paul faced conflict. Although Paul clearly did face Jewish opposition (2 Cor 11:24, 26), Luke focuses on it more often than on gentile opposition (compare Acts 9:23 with 2 Cor 11:32). Luke affirms his movement's Jewish heritage and basis (cf. Luke 1–2); he stresses Jewish opposition in part because Paul's *accusers* in the ultimately capital case against him are fellow Jews (Acts 24:1, 27; 25:7; 28:17–19).

Luke's account is clearly ironic on this point: it is Paul's *opponents* (i.e., those who would be viewed as allied with his accusers) who stirred the riots, rather than Paul himself. Ancient defense rhetoric regularly sought to shift guilt onto the accusers (see comment on Acts 24:19). Yet Paul's accusers had pointed to an uncomfortable pattern of riots occurring in many locations where Paul preached (cf. also *riots* in 2 Cor 6:5): he was clearly a polarizing figure.

Luke includes an apologetic for Paul on another level, for which the Gospel and first part of Acts prepares. The extensive parallels with Jesus and the Jerusalem Christian leaders reveal that those who respect Jesus and Peter should also respect Paul. If he suffered the humiliation of Roman

²⁶⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.488; *Ant.* 14.213–16, 223, 226–27, 235, 242, 245–46, 257–58, 260–64; 16.162–65; *Ag. Ap.* 2.61; Sanders, *Judaism*, 212. Although governors were not bound by precedents, the state did not like to reverse them, conceding long-standing error.

custody and execution, he simply followed the steps of his Lord. Historically Jewish unrest regarding Jesus was not limited to Paul's mission; see probably Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4.

Luke expects for Christians a future in the pagan empire. From a broader historical horizon unavailable to Luke, although Luke's strategic vision was ultimately realized, many generations of Christians encountered hostility from the empire (as they often had in Jerusalem) until that time.

THEOLOGY AND MESSAGE OF ACTS

I comment more briefly on Luke's theology than on historical issues here not because it is less important but because it is less controversial and because it emerges naturally for readers as they work through Acts itself. Some issues are so recurrent or debated today that they invite introductory comment here. Even so, these are merely samples; for the sake of space I omit here other themes, such as suffering and persecution, that nevertheless loom large in Acts.²⁶⁷

Israel's Story

Luke grounds the gentile mission in the story of the Jewish Messiah Jesus, and the story of Jesus in the story of Israel. For Luke, to follow Jesus is to follow Israel's promised leader, who welcomed gentiles into covenant obedience to Israel's God even if much of Israel failed to obey. Luke's emphasis on continuity with the biblical heritage was important to a movement that claimed ancient Israel's Scriptures as their own, as well as in a world that made antiquity a basic criterion of authenticity. Acts may move centrifugally away from Jerusalem, but from post-70 hindsight this was necessary for the young movement's survival.

Luke's ideal audience knows the biblical story well, from the Septuagint, the common Greek version of the Old Testament. He strategically locates key programmatic texts including Joel 2:28–32 (3:1–5 LXX) in Acts 2:17–21,

²⁶⁷ See, e.g., B. Dehandschutter, "La persécution des chrétiens dans les Actes des apôtres," pages 541–46 in Kremer, *Actes des apôtres*; Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 12–20; J. J. Kilgallen, "Persecution in the Acts of the Apostles," pages 143–60 in *Luke and Acts* (ed. G. O'Collins and G. Marconi; New York: Paulist, 1993); G. H. Twelftree, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke's View of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 101–9; S. Cunningham, "Through Many Tribulations": *The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 142; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

and several passages from Isaiah, in Luke 3:4–6; 4:18–19; Acts 13:46–47; 28:25–28, along with further allusions in Luke 24:46–47 and Acts 1:8.²⁶⁸ As ancient historians often remarked on fulfillment of oracles, Luke repeatedly shows the fulfillment of biblical prophecies.²⁶⁹

Jesus is Scripture's primary expositor in the Gospel (e.g., Luke 4:4, 8, 12, 18–19; 7:27; 8:10; 13:35; 18:20; 19:45; 20:17, 37, 42; 22:37; 23:30, 46; 24:27, 45). In Acts, Peter (Acts 1:20; 2:17–21, 25–28, 34–35; 3:23, 25) and John (4:11); the Jerusalem church (4:25–26); Stephen (7:3, 7, 18, 28, 32, 34, 37, 40, 42–43, 49–50); Paul (13:33–35, 41, 47; 23:5; 28:26–27); and James (15:16–18) quote Scripture. In Acts, Jesus's movement carries the primary voice of Scripture, and its adversaries fail to mount convincing arguments from it or accurately hear God's voice there (28:26–27).

Luke presents his story as the continuation of the earlier biblical story.²⁷⁰ The survey of key moments in salvation history in Acts 7 probably suggests that divine patterns of working in history constituted a major part of the tradition that Luke's apostolic church received from Jesus (Luke 24:27, 32, 44–45). Writers of Israel's Scripture themselves often followed earlier patterns in Scripture or tradition as models.²⁷¹ This approach to Scripture also coheres well with how Luke parallels figures in his own narrative.²⁷²

That the majority of the Jewish people had not committed themselves to the distinctive beliefs of this sect, and that some Jewish people opposed it, raised a new apologetic issue for Luke to address (just as Paul had to address the question earlier in Rom 3:3; 9:6; 11:1–2). Luke, like Paul, is dissatisfied with anything less than the conversion of Israel as a whole (Acts 3:19–26; Rom 11:7, 25–26); the repentance of God's people as a whole will bring about the fulfillment of God's promises (Acts 3:19–21, 25–26; Rom 11:11, 25, 30–32).

²⁶⁸ See esp. Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 37–101.

²⁶⁹ See, e.g., C. H. Talbert, "Promise and Fulfillment in Lucan Theology," pages 91–103 in Talbert, *Luke-Acts*; David Peterson, "The Motif of Fulfillment and the Purpose of Luke-Acts," pages 83–104 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*; Squires, *Plan*, 18–20, 46–51, 16–66; W. Kurz, "Promise and Fulfillment in Hellenistic Jewish Narratives and in Luke and Acts," pages 147–70 in Moessner, *Heritage*.

²⁷⁰ Johnson, *Acts*, 12; D. M. Smith, "When Did the Gospels Become Scripture?" *JBL* 119 (1, 2000): 3–20 (8–14); Litwak, *Echoes*, 206; B. S. Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," pages 65–82 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*, 82. Some earlier Greek historians envisioned their narratives as picking up where their predecessors left off, as do some later Christian writers (such as Bede).

²⁷¹ See, e.g., Josh 3:7; Hays, *Echoes*, 101.

²⁷² Some historians used earlier figures in their narratives to foreshadow later ones; see Balch, "Genre," 14–16, esp. 16.

Given the severity of gentile anti-Semitism in Luke's environment and the recent events of the war in Jerusalem (on the dating that I deem most probable), the relations of gentile believers to their Jewish heritage would be a matter of grave concern. After 70, explaining Jewish opposition as the reason for charges against Christians (e.g., 17:5–7; 18:13; 24:5–6; cf. 9:23; 13:50; 14:2; 21:28; but contrast 16:20–21; 19:26–27) could also help undercut anti-Jewish prejudice against Jesus's movement.

Some scholars go further, contending that Luke polemicizes against Israel itself.²⁷³ By such standards, however, one might consider many of Israel's prophets or the Qumran texts as anti-Jewish.²⁷⁴ Many Jewish people expected widespread apostasy in Israel in the end-time,²⁷⁵ and some seem to have viewed their own group as the true elect remnant of Israel.²⁷⁶ Josephus's theodicy viewed Jerusalem's fall as divine judgment and even envisioned God's favor on Rome. Unfortunately, subsequent Christian anti-Semitism has often anachronistically colored our perception of the earlier Jesus movement within Judaism. Jervell's argument in 1972 shifted the consensus of scholarship, which had previously viewed Luke as mostly negative toward Judaism.²⁷⁷

Luke's negative uses of "Jews" appear disproportionately with reference specifically to "Judeans," and correspond to the negative uses sometimes found in other Jewish texts about fellow Jews.²⁷⁸ Paul repeatedly threatens to turn to gentiles when his own people reject the message, yet he always continues to go to his own people first in new locations (13:46; 18:6;

²⁷³ J. T. Sanders, "The Salvation of the Jews in Luke Acts," pages 104–28 in Talbert, ed., *Luke-Acts*; idem, "Who Is a Jew and Who Is a Gentile in the Book of Acts?" *NTS* 37 (3, 1991): 434–55.

²⁷⁴ D. R. A. Hare, "The Rejection of the Jews in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," pages 27–47 in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (ed. A. T. Davies; New York: Paulist, 1979), 35–38; Rosner, "Biblical History," 71. Far more harshly, cf. 1QH^a 10.24.

²⁷⁵ E.g., 1Q20 15.9; 4Q163 f4–7.2.6; 4Q169 f3–4.2.2; 4Q390 frg. 1.7–9; 4Q501, line 3; 1 En. 91:7; 93:9; 4 Ezra 5:1–2; 14:16–18; T. Iss. 6:1; T. Dan 6:6; T. Naph. 4:1; 1 Tim 4:1; Sipre Deut. 318.1.10.

²⁷⁶ Cf. 1QM 17:6–8; 4QpNah 4.3; cf. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977), 242–49; J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents Relating to Their History, Religion, and Life* (POTTS 2; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1977), ii.

²⁷⁷ Jervell, *Luke and People of God*; idem, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); idem, "God's Faithfulness to the Faithless People: Trends in Interpretation of Luke-Acts," *WW* 12 (1, 1992): 29–36.

²⁷⁸ Cf. A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 34–36; C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 217–18.

28:25–28). Meanwhile, Jesus’s Jewish followers are also “Jews” in 16:20; 18:2; 21:20–21, and many Jews believe in Jesus (2:41, 47; 4:4; 6:7; 13:43; 14:1; 17:4, 11–12; 18:8; 19:9; 21:20).²⁷⁹ Acts thus often shows the Jewish community *divided* rather than uniformly hostile, even at its conclusion (28:24), where Paul continues to affirm his own solidarity with and love for his people (Acts 28:19–20).²⁸⁰

Significant protagonists such as Mary, Jesus, Peter, James, and Paul are faithful Jews (e.g., Luke 2:21–24, 27, 39; 9:30–31; 10:26; 24:44; Acts 10:14; 15:19–20; 16:3; 18:18; 21:23–26).²⁸¹ The elite, chief priests are consistently hostile,²⁸² but the Pharisees sometimes support the Jesus movement (5:34–39; 23:6–9) and some become believers (15:5; esp. 23:6).²⁸³ Luke’s narrative as a whole suggests that Jerusalem might have embraced the message about Jesus had the corrupt authorities not thwarted it. Luke is not anti-Jewish; he is against the authorities who once ruled Jerusalem.

Luke’s conflict reports could serve post-70 apologetic interests of dissociating from Judean nationalism, but Luke does not create such reports from scratch. Paul, at least, is known to have persecuted Christians (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13, 23; Phil 3:6), and could not have accomplished much single-handedly. He reports other persecution of Christians in Judea (1 Thess 2:14–16), his own suffering for Christ from synagogue leaders on multiple occasions (2 Cor 11:24, 26), and the expectation of hostility in Judea (Rom 15:31). Far from displaying an anti-Jewish agenda, Luke does not even recount Paul’s synagogue beatings (2 Cor 11:24)! Such conflicts reflect a larger pattern of intra-Jewish conflicts in the Second Temple period.²⁸⁴

Luke’s approach is far more like Jewish theodicy and intra-Jewish polemic than like genuinely anti-Jewish sources. Ancient sources show us

²⁷⁹ Those who suppose the term used uniformly negatively after 9:22 need to reread 11:19; 13:5, 43; 14:1; 17:1, 10–11, 17; 18:4–5, 19; 19:10, 17; 20:21; 22:12; 28:17.

²⁸⁰ For more detail, see, e.g., Brawley, *Luke-Acts and Jews*, 133–54; Jervell, *People of God*, 44, 49; Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 268–69; R. F. O’Toole, “Reflections on Luke’s Treatment of Jews in Luke-Acts,” *Bib* 74 (4, 1993): 529–55.

²⁸¹ See also, e.g., Luke 2:25–36; 22:12; e.g., J. Jervell, “Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: Tradition, History, Theology,” pages 297–306 in Kremer, *Actes des apôtres*; G. P. Carras, “Observant Jews in the Story of Luke and Acts: Paul, Jesus, and Other Jews,” pages 693–708 in Verheyden, *Unity*.

²⁸² They do not fare well in other surviving contemporary sources either: the Qumran scrolls, Pharisaic recollections in later rabbinic sources, and sometimes in Josephus (who offers a more diverse picture).

²⁸³ Cf. 15:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–203.

²⁸⁴ E.g., 1QpHab 8.8–12; 9.4–7; 12.5; 4QpNah 1.11; Josephus, *War* 6.301; *Life* 272–75, 302–3; cf. *m. Yad.* 4:7; *t. Hag.* 3:35.

what genuine anti-Judaism looked like. The anti-Jewish version of the exodus was that Egypt expelled the unclean Jews for leprosy.²⁸⁵ Apion's blood libel against Jewish people resurfaced in more dangerous forms in later centuries,²⁸⁶ and various slanders eventually found their way into more mainstream sources.²⁸⁷ Genuinely anti-Judaic authorities often abused the Jewish people.²⁸⁸

By contrast, Romans would hardly have viewed as anti-Judaic Luke's evoking the Jewish heritage for a Jewish movement that included uncircumcised gentile converts.²⁸⁹ His language is more like intra-Jewish conflict, and is more nuanced than either Matthew or John.²⁹⁰

The Gospel

Dodd's eschatologically oriented summary of elements in Acts' apostolic preaching remains valuable:

1. The "age of fulfilment has dawned."
2. This has occurred "through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus," as Scripture says.
3. On the basis "of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted" at God's right hand as Messiah, king of Israel.
4. The present activity of "the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory."
5. Christ's return will soon consummate this interim era.

"Finally," he emphasizes, "the *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of 'salvation,' that is, of 'the life of the Age to Come'."²⁹¹

Nevertheless, such features are not all equally prominent. Most evangelistic speeches mention the resurrection, and other speeches may do so as well (Acts 1:22; 2:24, 31–32; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33–37; 17:18,

²⁸⁵ See, e.g., discussion in L. Raspe, "Manetho on the Exodus," *JSQ* 5 (2, 1998): 124–54.

²⁸⁶ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.89–111.

²⁸⁷ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 34.3; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.

²⁸⁸ See, e.g., Philo, *Embassy* 349–65; *Flacc.* passim.

²⁸⁹ Luke does not go as far as some later Christian writers; cf. e.g., Papias frg. 27.1; Justin, *Dial.* 11, 29, 123, 135; Diogn. 4.6.

²⁹⁰ See, e.g., C. A. Evans, "Prophecy and Polemic: Jews in Luke's Scriptural Apologetic," pages 171–211 in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 210.

²⁹¹ Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching*, 21–23.

31–32; 23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:8, 23). By contrast, the Holy Spirit appears in speeches to Jews and, when to gentiles, to gentile Christians (1:5, 8, 16; 2:17–18, 33, 38; 5:32; 7:51; 10:38; 11:12, 15–16; 15:8, 28; 20:23, 28; 28:25); most non-Christian gentiles would not understand the Jewish and Christian meaning of the Spirit without explanation.

Although Acts is not a biography of Jesus the way Luke's Gospel is, it continues what Jesus "began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1), makes him the subject of apostolic preaching, reports healings "in his name" (3:6, 13, 16; 4:10), shows that he is the one who continues to act through his agents (9:34), and even shows him acting directly in some scenes (e.g., 9:3–16; 18:9–10; 22:18–21).

Jesus is the object of proclamation or "preaching good news" (e.g., 5:42; 8:5, 35; 9:20; 11:20; 17:3; 28:31), the equivalent of preaching the kingdom (8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; esp. 28:31). Jesus fulfills what Moses only started (3:22–23; 7:37), and what all prophets foretold (3:24) and deliverers foreshadowed (7:9–37). Jesus healed (2:22; 10:38), but some of his people rejected and murdered him (2:23; 7:52) according to God's plan (2:23; 3:18; 4:28), the leaders bearing special responsibility (3:17; 4:10, 26–27; 5:30; 13:27).

But God raised him up (2:32; 3:15; 5:30) and enthroned him at his own right hand, as the psalmist's "lord" (2:33–35; 5:31). His title "Lord" is pervasive (e.g., 9:1, 10, 11, 17, 27, 28; 11:16; 22:10; 23:11; 26:15),²⁹² often as "the Lord Jesus" (e.g., 4:33; 8:16; 9:17; 11:17, 20; 15:11, 26; 16:31; 19:5, 13, 17; 20:21, 24, 35; 21:13; 28:31), and he appears in divine glory (9:3–5; 22:7–8; 26:14–15). He is also Son of man (7:56), God's servant (3:13, 26; cf. 8:32–33), the holy and righteous one (3:14; 7:52), the prince of life (3:15), and the psalmist's rejected but exalted cornerstone (4:11).

Luke regularly highlights Jesus's role as "savior" (5:31; 13:23; Luke 2:11) in the preaching and experience of salvation (2:21, 40, 47; 4:9, 12; 11:14; 13:26, 47; 15:11; 16:30–31; cf. 7:25; 15:1; 16:17; Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 13:23–24; 19:9–10).²⁹³

²⁹² Also a divine title in Acts (2:34, 39; 5:9; 8:22, 24, 39; 9:31; 13:2; 16:14), especially when referring to OT citations (2:20–21; 3:22; 4:26; 7:31, 33, 49; 13:47; 15:17, 18). Cf. also "Lord of all" (10:36) and the "name of the Lord" (2:21 with 2:38; applied to Jesus in 8:16; 9:28; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13).

²⁹³ See extensive discussion in, e.g., O'Toole, *Unity*, 33–61; M. A. Powell, "Salvation in Luke-Acts," *WW* 12 (1, 1992): 5–10; J. B. Green, "Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: God as the Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles," pages 83–106 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*; H. D. Buckwalter, "The Divine Saviour," pages 107–24 in *ibid.*; C. W. Stenschke, "The Need for Salvation," pages 125–44 in *ibid.*; B. Witherington III, "Salvation and Health in

The Diaspora/Gentile Mission

The focus of Acts is not simply church or theological history in the mold of Eusebius, but tracing the expansion of the early Jesus movement from Jerusalem to the heart of the empire.²⁹⁴ Whereas Luke's first volume opens and closes in or near Jerusalem, his second volume moves from Jerusalem to Rome – from heritage to mission. Luke recounts how the mission, by the power of God's Spirit, successfully surmounted many obstacles, "unhindered" (Acts 28:31; cf. 8:36; 10:47; 11:17).²⁹⁵

Luke's Gospel foreshadows this mission in Luke 2:32; 4:25–27, illustrated especially by foreign soldiers (e.g., Luke 3:14; 7:2–10; 23:47; cf. Acts 10:1); passages about Samaritans (Luke 10:33; 17:16; cf. 9:52); and Jesus's ministry to other groups that were marginal for the Judean elite (5:32; 7:22, 34; 14:21; 15:1–2).²⁹⁶ Still, he omits some of what he could have used (see Mark 7:24–30; 11:17; 13:10), and he certainly did not impose it much onto "the pre-Easter story."²⁹⁷ Whereas a religious elite complains about Jesus eating with sinners in the Gospel (Luke 5:30; 15:2; cf. 7:39), Jesus's own followers appear in a parallel role in Acts (Acts 11:2–3).

Most Jews, especially in the Diaspora, welcomed gentiles to worship their God, but the vast majority of Jews would require these gentiles to be circumcised if they wished belong to Israel and the covenant.²⁹⁸ Some individuals even sought proselytes,²⁹⁹ though Judaism did not send out formal "missionaries" for this purpose.³⁰⁰ Paul welcomes gentiles as genuine converts, but not all his more nationalistic fellow believers in Jerusalem

Christian Antiquity: The Soteriology of Luke-Acts in Its First-Century Setting," pages 145–66 in *ibid.*

²⁹⁴ H. A. Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1972), 17; Bovon, *Theologian*, 238.

²⁹⁵ See F. Stagg, "The Unhindered Gospel," *RevExp* 71 (4, 1974): 451–62; *idem*, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1955), 12–17.

²⁹⁶ See further Lane, *Gentile Mission*, 43–57. The theme of the poor in Luke's Gospel (T. Hoyt, Jr., "The Poor in Luke-Acts" [PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1974], 97–212) continues in Acts (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35; 6:1–3; 11:28–30; 24:17), though not as dominantly.

²⁹⁷ C. M. Tuckett, *Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 54.

²⁹⁸ For the range of views, see Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*, 206–12; esp. T. L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 52–74.

²⁹⁹ See Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.210; *Ant.* 18.81–83; esp. 20.34–48; cf. *m. Abot* 1:12; B. J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (New York: KTAV, 1968), 19–228.

³⁰⁰ P. Bowers, "Paul and Religious Propaganda in the First Century," *NovT* 22 (4, 1980): 316–23, here 320–21; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 19–33; S. McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991).

agreed; in 15:20, 29, the compromise measure in Jerusalem treats them as God-fearers rather than full converts.

The Christian message spreads through pivotal agents, especially Jesus, Peter, and Paul.³⁰¹ Because the mission to all nations after the early chapters involves especially the gentile mission, many see the gentile mission (or perhaps more accurately the universal mission) as his central theme.³⁰² Although Luke's vision of ethnic universalism is textually grounded in that of Isaiah (2:2–4; 11:10–12; 49:6; 52:10, 15; 56:7), it would also resonate with hellenistic and Roman strands of universalism, except with God's empire rather than Alexander's or Rome's. The distinctive combination of early Christians' ethnic universalism and (much rarer) theistic particularism made conversion of others an imperative.

Ancient historiography highlighted examples or models. Luke's parallels among leading characters suggests consistent patterns that serve not only a potential apologetic value (e.g., vindicating Paul for those who respected Jesus) but also provide a norm (or better, a template) for recognizing God's continuing activity.³⁰³

As a theological historian, Luke locates the mission of Jesus and the church in the metanarrative of salvation history.³⁰⁴ Like good ancient writers, Luke is happy to start a story in the middle, providing the background as he proceeds: although he opens the story with Jesus's coming, biblical quotations and allusions provide the prequel.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ A title such as "From Jesus to Paul" is more accurate than the "acts of the apostles," since apart from Peter, it focuses on those Luke rarely (Paul) or never (Stephen) calls apostles (M. Hengel, "The Geography of Palestine in Acts," pages 27–78 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 36).

³⁰² For the theme, see, e.g., Wilson, *Gentile Mission*; D. P. Senior and C. Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 255–79; Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 161–73; Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 598–600; H. N. Keathley, *The Church's Mission to the Gentiles: Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of Paul* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1999), 3–62.

³⁰³ The parallels are possible because the same Spirit that empowered Jesus also empowers his followers (Acts 1:8; 2:17–18; 10:38).

³⁰⁴ Cf. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 373–75. W. J. Larkin, "The Recovery of Luke-Acts as 'Grand Narrative' for the Church's Evangelistic and Edification Tasks in a Postmodern Age," *JETS* 43 (3, 2000): 405–15, rightly speaks of Luke-Acts as "grand narrative," hence a metanarrative that provides cohesion for individual stories. D. R. Miller, *Empowered for Global Mission: A Missionary Look at the Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers, 2005), 42–43, 82, rightly recognizes the missiological dimension of Acts' purpose.

³⁰⁵ Many ancient epics presuppose a broader cycle of widely known oral stories to which allusion was made (e.g., allusions to the voyage of the Argo in Homer, *Od.* 12.69–72; cf.

Acts likewise points to an unfinished mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth; by planting it in Rome, Paul has laid a solid foundation for continuing outreach and provides a model for the continuing mission of the church until Jesus returns (1:8–11). Jesus is thus the centerpiece and climax of history, and his apostles illustrate how Luke's audience should continue his mission.³⁰⁶ As Stephen (Acts 7) and Paul (Acts 13) preach from themes in biblical history, Luke provides clues for his more specific agendas in the themes he emphasizes while recounting the history of Jesus, the Jerusalem church, and Paul.

Luke's own account spans a more limited period. The Gospel begins (Luke 1:9) and closes (24:52) in Jerusalem (in fact, in the temple: 1:9–10; 24:53), grounded in the heritage of the Old Testament. Acts, however, begins in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) but proceeds to Rome (28:16), the sample of (more particularly, the symbolic, strategic center and catalyst for) "the ends of the earth" most relevant for Luke's readers in the empire.³⁰⁷ Although this mission to the "ends of the earth" is rooted in Scripture (cf. Acts 13:47, quoting Isa 49:6) and begins in Jerusalem, its fulfillment and goal are eschatological (even in the Isaiah texts as they were understood; cf. Acts 1:6–8).

The biblical story continues in a way prefigured earlier in the story (Acts 13:17–41; also Acts 7:2–53). Remaining grounded in Scripture and the foundational story of Israel, Luke-Acts also highlights the Spirit moving God's people centrifugally, *from heritage to mission*.³⁰⁸ Many observe the geographic pattern in Acts of Jerusalem to Rome,³⁰⁹ an observation emphasized earlier by Streeter,³¹⁰ who titled Acts "The Road to Rome."³¹¹

This movement from heritage (epitomized in Jerusalem) to mission (exemplified in Rome) would challenge Jerusalem's centrality in this age

also Acts 20:35); further, most people heard such epics multiple times, hence could approach the story with the necessary preliminary story in mind.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Karris, *Invitation*, 15. L. Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-apostolic Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 9, rightly notes that Luke connects Jesus and the development of the church in terms of redemptive history.

³⁰⁷ Despite the geographic shift and the emphasis on the gentile mission (28:28), the Jewish people remain prominent (28:17–28).

³⁰⁸ Cf. similarly others, e.g., J. B. Green, "The Demise of the Temple as 'Culture Center' in Luke-Acts: An Exploration of the Rending of the Temple Veil (Luke 23:44–49)," *RB* 101 (4, 1994): 495–515; B. E. Bowe, "The Birth of the Church," *BibT* 37 (5, 1999): 288–93.

³⁰⁹ E.g., Neil, *Acts*, 27; Packer, *Acts*, 2; Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*; Judge, *Athens*, 50.

³¹⁰ B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, and Dates* (rev. ed.; London: Macmillan, 1930), 531–32.

³¹¹ *Gospels*, 532.

affirmed by even most Diaspora Jews³¹² – a historic centrality that had undoubtedly caused ideological crisis after 70 CE. Christians even in the Pauline circle continued to cede a special authority or relevance to Jerusalem (Rom 15:19, 25–27; Gal 2:1) or to Jerusalem leaders or other “authentic” Jewish Christians (2 Cor 11:22; Gal 1:17, 22; 2:9; Phil 3:5; cf. 1 Cor 1:12; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 2:14).

Even former pagans might be accustomed to privilege Jerusalem; as pagans they had been familiar with particular sites holy to particular cults, deities, or heroes, or even cities dedicated to special patron deities. Pagans might question the power of Israel’s deity, since its holy city was destroyed by Rome; but Luke, like Josephus, shows that God himself judged Jerusalem. For Luke, however, this judgment (Luke 19:44; 20:16, 19; 21:22; 23:28–31) stems from rejecting both Jesus (Luke 9:22; 17:25; 18:31; 20:17) and his messengers of reconciliation toward gentiles (Acts 22:21–22). Jerusalem preferred an anti-Roman revolutionary depending on human power (Luke 23:18; Acts 3:14), to their divinely promised leader who heeded the pleas of a Roman officer (Luke 7:9–10).

Luke writes history, but ancient historiography includes paradigms and lessons for the audiences of the historians’ own era. Since patterns in Jesus’s ministry are replicated in that of the Jerusalem church and then in the gentile mission (the latter still carried on in Diaspora churches of Luke’s era), it is difficult to evade the conclusion that the repetitive features in Luke’s portrayal of the early church are deliberate and paradigmatic. If the mission continues till the end of the age (see 1:8), Luke’s history of the positive prototypes for that mission suggests how the church should continue to carry out the mission, including with signs and cross-cultural unity.

Some modern readers might seek to evade this conclusion partly by distinguishing conspicuously supernatural activity like signs and wonders from potentially “natural” activity like preaching the gospel, arguing that only the latter is a model. This criterion for dividing Luke’s material, however, is anachronistic, distorting Luke’s purpose in the service of accommodating Enlightenment rationalism (see the chapter on signs). For Luke and the apostolic church, the gospel was if anything even more supernatural than the signs and wonders that followed it (hence, “the word of the Lord” throughout Acts; cf. also 1 Thess 2:13); to persuade without

³¹² For Jerusalem-centeredness in a broad range of ancient Jewish sources, see Keener, *John*, 613–14.

the Spirit's power might produce some religious converts like those of any other cult, but this approach to proselytization falls short of the apostolic ideal portrayed in our early Christian documents (1 Cor 2:4-5). God's power is present in his gospel (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18).

Eschatology

Because Luke writes history, some suppose that eschatological fervor in his movement has cooled. This contrast infers too much from genre; apocalyptic literature sometimes summarizes earlier history, and the fervently eschatological Qumran sectarians preserved the teachings of their founder. Luke clearly maintains future eschatology (e.g., Luke 13:25-30; 17:20-18:8; 21:20-36; Acts 1:6-7; 3:19-21), sometimes even in apostolic preaching to gentiles (Acts 10:42; 17:31). Because many divine promises are fulfilled within the narrative of Luke-Acts (including the promise of the Spirit in 1:4-5), Luke presumably expects us to infer that the promise of Jesus's coming (1:11) will also be fulfilled.³¹³

Nevertheless, some think that, due to the delay of the parousia,³¹⁴ Luke denied the parousia's imminence and simply called his audience to spread their message until Christ's return. Hans Conzelmann in particular tried to fit Luke-Acts into a tripartite division of salvation history: the Old Testament era; Jesus's ministry; and the era of the church (cf. Luke 16:16).³¹⁵ Subsequent scholarship, however, has challenged this approach. Luke certainly allows for more delay than the first disciples expected, but he leaves open the possibility of a nearer end.³¹⁶ After all, Luke portrays the church's experience of the Spirit and mission as the "last days," the eschatological era (Acts 2:17).

Luke focuses more on realized eschatology than does, say, Matthew (see, e.g., Luke 17:21; 19:9; Acts 1:6-8; 2:2-4, 17-21).³¹⁷ Nevertheless, early

³¹³ With Gaventa, *Acts*, 67.

³¹⁴ Cf. 2 Pet 3:3-9. Delayed expectations proved problematic for other Jewish thinkers as well; see, e.g., 1QpHab 7.7-8, 11-12; 4 Ezra 4:33-37; 7:74; 2 Bar. 24:2; b. *Sanh.* 97b.

³¹⁵ Conzelmann, *Theology of Luke*, 95-136; cf. Haenchen, *Acts*, 95-96.

³¹⁶ S. G. Wilson, "Lukan Eschatology," *NTS* 16 (4, 1970): 330-47; K. Giles, "Present-Future Eschatology in the Book of Acts," *RTR* 40 (1981): 65-71; 41 (1982): 11-18; B. R. Gaventa, "The Eschatology of Luke-Acts Revisited," *Enc* 43 (1982): 27-42; C. M. Tuckett, *Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 36-43; J. Nolland, "Salvation-History and Eschatology," pages 63-81 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 65-76; cf. the survey in Bovon, *Theologian*, 25-74.

³¹⁷ Cf., e.g., Maddox, *Purpose*, 145.

Christians would no doubt have viewed as strange the twentieth-century reduction of apocalyptic eschatology into existentialism.³¹⁸ Had Jesus's earliest followers desired noneschatological forms for expressing their faith, such options existed in the ideas of Sadducees and much of Diaspora Judaism.

The gentile mission (treated above) is related to Luke's eschatology (cf. Luke 21:24, "times of the Gentiles"). If Luke understands Isaiah as saying that the period of welcoming gentiles lasts until Israel's repentance and restoration,³¹⁹ then the very hardness of Israel justifies the universal mission, against frequent Jewish objections. When Israel turns to the king God appointed for them, God will bring about the end (Acts 3:19–21). The mission to the gentiles may be another or prior prerequisite in God's plan (Acts 1:6–8; cf. Matt 24:14; Rom 11:25–26).³²⁰

The Spirit

The Spirit is central in Luke's theology and has invited considerable scholarly comment.³²¹ If one counts all possible references to the Spirit in Acts (fifty-nine), these constitute nearly a quarter of New Testament

³¹⁸ As in R. Bultmann, "History and Eschatology in the New Testament," *NTS* 1 (1, 1954): 5–16 (16); N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1963), 115.

³¹⁹ "To make them jealous," as Deut 32:21 and Paul (Rom 10:19; 11:11, 14) put it.

³²⁰ A. J. Mattill, "The Date and Purpose of Luke-Acts: Rackham Reconsidered," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 335–50 (350), even contends that Luke wrote Acts to hasten the fulfillment of the gentile mission and its role in God's end-time plan; but note Luke's omission of Mark 13:10.

³²¹ See, e.g., G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke," pages 159–200 in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1957); E. Trocmé, *L'Esprit-Saint et l'Eglise* (Paris: Fayard, 1969), 19–44; K. Stalder, "Der Heilige Geist in der lukanischen Ekklesiologie," *UnS* 30 (1975): 287–93; R. J. Karris, *What Are They Saying about Luke and Acts? A Theology of the Faithful God* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 105–17; M. M. B. Turner, "The Significance of Receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts: A Survey of Modern Scholarship," *Trinity Journal* 2 (2, 1981): 131–58; Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 198–238; J. das Carreira Neves, "História e Espírito Santo nos Actos dos apóstolos," *Didaskalia* 25 (1–2, 1995): 195–234; J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts," pages 165–83 in Verheyden, *Unity*; Marguerat, *Histoire*, 149–74; K. Warrington, *Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 51–74; J. M. Hamilton, "Rushing Wind and Organ Music: Toward Luke's Theology of the Spirit in Acts," *RTR* 65 (1, 2006): 15–33; C. S. Keener, "Power of Pentecost: Luke's Missiology in Acts 1–2," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12 (1, Jan. 2009): 47–73; G. Haya-Prats, *Empowered Believers: The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts* (ed. P. Elbert; trans. S. A. Ellington; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

references to the Spirit; no other New Testament book has even half as many.³²² At the pivotal transition between Luke's two volumes, Jesus's final preascension words to his disciples reaffirm (cf. Luke 3:16) the promise of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8). In fact, the major programmatic texts of both volumes involve the Spirit's empowerment for the mission of God's agents (Luke 4:18–19; 24:48–49; Acts 1:8; 2:17–18). Chrysostom understandably called Acts “the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.”³²³

Despite Luke's narrative focus on leading figures, he affirms that the Spirit is for all believers (Acts 2:17), hence participation in the mission extends beyond the original “witnesses” (1:8) to all believers (8:4). This empowerment continues to be offered to all believers (2:38), including later generations of gentile Christians (like much of Luke's audience; 2:39). The Jerusalem church expected the Spirit always to follow in churches that were in spiritual continuity with the apostles (8:14–17; 9:17; 10:44); the signs of continuity could be that later groups received the Spirit “just as” the first believers did (10:47; cf. 11:15; 15:8).

Luke's Gospel is full of references to the Spirit, with each aspect of the Spirit's work there reappearing in Acts.³²⁴ For Luke, as for other early Christians, emphasis on the Spirit underlined dependence on God's power and activity. In the “programmatic” text for Luke's Gospel,³²⁵ Jesus is empowered with the Spirit in connection with his mission (Luke 4:18–19), and his ministry biblically prefigures the gentile mission (4:25–27). Many regard Acts 2:17–18 as the key programmatic text of the second volume. The Spirit, sent fundamentally to empower the apostolic witness (1:8), is democratized in subsequent narratives among all believers in all places (2:39), including Samaritans (8:15–17) and gentiles (10:45–46) – even though the Spirit was expected to mark the restored, covenant people of God.³²⁶ God was readier to accept such later groups

³²² Hull, *Spirit in Acts*, 12; cf. Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 3–5; M. M. B. Turner, “Spirit Endowment in Luke-Acts: Some Linguistic Considerations,” *VE* 12 (1981): 45–63.

³²³ *Hom.* 1.5, cited in Bruce, *Acts*¹, 61 n. 3; Bock, *Acts*, 36.

³²⁴ R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 34–48, with special emphasis on prophetic inspiration.

³²⁵ E.g., Wilson, *Gentile Mission*, 40; I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 91. With regard to its significance, cf. also the possible chiasm in the passage (K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976], 68; D. L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980], 35).

³²⁶ See Isa 32:15; 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; 61:1; Ezek 36:26–27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; Zech 12:10; Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 96–121; cf. Turner, *Power*, 300–1.

than were the apostles, and confirmed his acceptance of them by this gift (10:44–48; 11:15; 15:8; cf. 13:52).

One key text is John's prophecy about the coming one baptizing the righteous in the Spirit and the wicked in fire (Luke 3:16).³²⁷ This promise of baptism in the Spirit (Acts 1:5) is identical with the "gift" (2:38; cf. 8:20) and "promise" (1:4; 2:33, 39; Luke 24:49). The Spirit as "gift" (2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17) is the Spirit as "promise" (they are identified in Acts 2:38–39), identified with the experience in Acts 2 (2:33, 39 show the fulfillment of the "promise" in 1:4). As gift and promise, the Spirit further reflects God's benevolence, not a resource people can buy (Acts 8:20) or earn (cf. similarly Rom 5:5; Gal 3:2–5), in contrast with one stream of Jewish tradition in which the Spirit is reserved only for the most pious.³²⁸

Contrasted with the eschatological fire baptism of the wicked (Luke 3:16), it includes the entire sphere of the Spirit's work into which conversion initiates the believer. Like Paul,³²⁹ Luke associates the Spirit with presently realized eschatology (1:7–8; 2:17). Because some Jewish circles believed that the Spirit had been suppressed (at least in the sense of inspiring full prophets),³³⁰ the presence of the Spirit suggests eschatological ramifications (cf. Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27–28; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–3:1). Some other Jewish circles apparently believed that the Spirit's activity among them represented the proximity of the end-time.³³¹ The Spirit is probably also associated with covenant renewal, especially in the Pentecost narrative.³³²

Luke does not envision that the eschatological promise of the Spirit poured out on Pentecost would be poured back: the outpouring is for the "last days" (2:17), the era of salvation (2:21), and the time of Christ's reign until all enemies are subjugated beneath his feet (2:34–35). Luke views the Spirit's activity depicted in Acts as inaugurated eschatology

³²⁷ For this interpretation of the Q saying, see my argument in C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 127–28; cf. R. P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 54; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 137–44.

³²⁸ See, e.g., *t. Sotah* 13:3–4; *Mek. Beshallah* 7.135ff.; but contrast *m. Sotah* 9:15; *t. Sotah* 13:2; esp. *Wis* 9:17.

³²⁹ See Rom 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 2:9–10; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Gal 6:8; Eph 1:13–14.

³³⁰ See 1 Macc 4:45–46; 9:27; 14:41; Sir 36:14–16; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.41; 4 *Ezra* 12:42; 2 *Bar.* 85:3; *t. Sotah* 12:5; 13:3.

³³¹ D. E. Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity* (NovTSup 28; Leiden: Brill, 1972), passim (esp. on Qumran).

³³² M. Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JPTSUP 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 118, 252–53; in early Judaism, see 56–111.

therefore normative for the entire duration of the church's mission until Jesus's return.

Whereas conversion initiates believers into the sphere of the Spirit, Acts is clear that conversion does not exhaust the continuing experience of aspects of the Spirit's empowerment (cf., e.g., 4:8, 31).³³³ Luke's narrative quickly departs (perhaps two-thirds of the time) from his neat theological schema in 2:38, suggesting diversity in the early Christian experience that he reports. Believers in Acts could experience the Spirit at faith but before baptism (10:44–48); near baptism (9:17–18; 19:5–6); subsequent to baptism (8:12–17); and on multiple occasions (cf. 2:4 with 4:8, 31; 9:17 with 13:9).

The diversity of Luke's depiction may reflect his emphasis on a particular dimension of the divine Spirit's work. Luke only rarely addresses the Spirit's role in conversion; he associates the Spirit particularly often and emphatically (though not exclusively) with prophetic proclamation (Luke 1:15, 41–42, 67; 2:25–27; Acts 4:25; 11:28; 19:6; 21:11; 28:25; programmatically, 2:17–18).³³⁴ The OT often associated the Spirit with prophetic empowerment (Num 11:25–26; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23; Joel 2:28–29; 1 Pet 1:11), and this is its dominant (though not exclusive) association in early Judaism.³³⁵ The Spirit prophetically inspires the content of the message in

³³³ So also various authors (e.g., Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*; C. S. Keener, *Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001], 157–68). John's phrase in Luke 3:16 encompasses the entire sphere of the Spirit's eschatological work, but Luke emphasizes the prophetic empowerment dimension (see Acts 1:8; 2:17–18). The association with conversion occurs at the theological level (as in 2:38), but in narratives, even when the Spirit is received at conversion, this reception is often expressed in a charismatic-prophetic way (10:44–48). That Luke's emphasis on the Spirit is on prophetic empowerment rather than on salvation or sanctification is clear enough at the textual level; see, e.g., Haya-Prats, *Believers*, passim (esp. xvii, 138, 192, 237).

³³⁴ See Menzies, *Empowered*, 106–228; Menzies, *Development*, 205–77 (on Acts); Y. Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 162–95; Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 31, 34, 192; M. Turner, "The 'Spirit of Prophecy' as the Power of Israel's Restoration and Witness," pages 327–48 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 327–48 (esp. 333–37). Cf. other prophetic-like activities, as in Luke 24:19; R. Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology* (JPTSUP 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 35–53.

³³⁵ See, e.g., *Jub.* 31:12; *1 Enoch* 91:1; *1QS* 8:16; *Sir* 48:24; *LAB* 28:6; Philo, *Flight* 186; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.166; *4 Ezra* 14:22; *t. Pesah.* 2:15; *Mek. Pisha* 1.150ff.; *Shirata* 7.17–18; *Sipre Deut.* 22.1.2; Menzies, *Empowered*, 49–101; Menzies, *Development*, 53–112; idem, "Spirit and Power in Luke-Acts: A Response to Max Turner," *JSNT* 49 (1993): 11–20; Turner, *Power*, 86–104; C. S. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 10–13, 31–33; Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 10–51. For surveys of the Spirit in early Judaism, see, e.g., M. E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in*

Acts, the prophetic “word” (cf. 2 Sam 23:2; Isa 59:21; Zech 7:12), i.e., the good news about Christ (Acts 4:31).

The new association with tongues in Acts 2:4 highlights the cross-cultural dimension of this prophetic empowerment announced in 1:8. The Spirit empowers cross-cultural evangelism in the rest of the book (8:29; 10:19–20; 11:12), pointing out where (or where not) to evangelize at a given time (16:6–7), providing a theological basis for unity (15:28), and even snatching Philip away for him to keep preaching to other strategic places (8:39–40). The Spirit sends Barnabas and Saul out (13:2, 4), as demonstrated by the Spirit’s power in 13:9, providing a Spirit-empowered paradigm for the rest of their mission (as with Jesus’s ministry in Luke 4:1, 14, 18).

Outpourings of the Spirit on the community bring sharing with the needy (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35), fitting a wider concern in Luke-Acts (Luke 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20; 18:22; 19:8; 21:2–3; Acts 6:1; 11:29–30; 24:17), including Jesus’s own empowerment with the Spirit (Luke 4:18–19). Trustworthy leaders could be “full of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; 11:24) and could be appointed by the Spirit (20:28; perhaps appointed through the Spirit’s direction, perhaps confirmed in prophecy as in 13:2–4; cf. 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). The Spirit provides boldness for witness even in hostile settings (4:8, 31; 5:32; 6:10; 7:51, 55; cf. Luke 12:11–12).

The outpoured Spirit demonstrates the foretaste of eschatology in Jesus’s enthronement (2:33), and by pouring out God’s Spirit Jesus takes on a clearly divine role (cf. Luke 3:16; Joel 2:28–29). The divine Spirit is thus also “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7; cf. Rom 8:9; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11).

Signs

Like other authors, Luke sometimes links the Spirit with reports of signs and wonders (cf. Acts 2:43; 4:30–31; 6:5, 8, 10).³³⁶ If Elijah and Elisha provide the prophetic model for Jesus’s ministry as prophet in the Gospel of Luke (1:17; 4:25–27; 9:8, 19, 54, 61–62; cf. 24:19; Acts 1:8–11; 9:39–41), it

Hellenistic Judaism and Its Bearing on the New Testament (London: Heythrop College Press, 1976); D. F. Büchsel, *Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1926).

³³⁶ See, e.g., A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (SNTSMS 31; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 149–51; M. Turner, “The Spirit and the Power of Jesus’s Miracles in the Lucan Conception,” *NovT* 33 (2, 1991): 124–52; cf. Marguerat, *Histoire*, 163–65. Cf., e.g., Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:8–11; Heb 2:4; Matt 12:28.

is not surprising that the prophetic Spirit in Acts would often be expressed in signs and wonders.

Luke emphasizes signs and treats them more unambiguously positively than do, say, Mark or John. Signs confirm the gentile mission (10:45–48; 15:12) and also enable Christ's followers within the narrative world to draw attention to the gospel, which often provides physical as well as ultimate "benefaction" and "salvation" (4:9–12; 10:38).³³⁷

Despite Luke's focus on Peter and Paul, and although Luke did not expect every individual believer to do what these leading figures did, signs and wonders are not limited to Paul's circle and the Jerusalem apostles (6:8; 8:6–7, 13; 9:12, 17–18; Luke 10:17). To argue that Luke expects signs to cease after Acts 28 is not only to argue from silence but to ignore Luke's narrative pattern.³³⁸

Signs constitute a major, or perhaps the major, means of inviting attention to the message throughout Luke-Acts (Acts 2:4, 12, 16–18, 43; 3:11–12; 4:4; 5:5, 10–16; 8:6–7; 9:34–35, 40–42; 13:9–12; 14:3; 16:29–30; 19:11–12, 17; cf. 28:9–10). Signs are primarily intended to attest the message of Christ's grace (Acts 14:3), and the church apparently prayed for signs to confirm its message (4:30). They draw attention to Christ, in whose name they are performed (3:6; 4:7, 10, 30; 16:18; 19:13, 17; cf. Luke 9:49; 10:17), not to the miracle workers (Acts 3:12; 14:3, 15). Signs encouraged boldness even in the face of persecution (4:24–31; cf. 14:2–3; 7:55–57), and those who did not respond to signs with faith often responded with persecution (5:16–17; 6:8–12; 16:18–19; cf. 14:19; 19:24–29).

Signs belong to Luke's theology of "power" for evangelism (1:8; cf. 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 10:38; Luke 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1). Jesus's "signs and wonders" (2:22) fulfill Joel's "wonders" (2:19), continued by Jesus's apostles (2:43). Moses's signs (7:36) likewise prefigure this activity, evoking the dramatic salvation-historical activity of the exodus.³³⁹ Luke would presumably expect this salvation-historical activity to persist so long as the mission of Acts 1:8 continues.

³³⁷ Cf. B. E. Williams, *Miracle Stories in the Biblical Book Acts of the Apostles* (MBPS 59; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2001), 180–82. For healing in Luke-Acts, see, e.g., Pilch, *Healing*, 89–117; Marguerat, *Histoire*, 175–203.

³³⁸ R. P. Menzies, "Acts 2.17–21: A Paradigm for Pentecostal Mission," *JPT* 17 (2, 2008): 200–18. The supposed reduction of signs some have suggested in Acts' later chapters ignores 20:9–12; 27:23–25; and 28:5, 8–9; and that Paul's captivity dominates 21:33–28:31 (Jesus does not work many signs during the passion narrative, either).

³³⁹ Exod 7:3, 9; 11:9–10; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Ps 77(ET 78):43; 104(105):27; 134(135):9; Jer 39(ET 32):20–21; Wis 10:16; Bar 2:11.

Like Jesus's ministry of healings and defending the marginalized in the Gospel, healings also constituted benefactions (4:9; 10:38; cf. 28:8–10), which helped needy believers even if no unbelievers were present to be evangelized (20:10–12). Healings and deliverance reveal not only the Lord's power but also his compassion and mercy (Luke 7:13; 17:13; 18:38–39). Celestial explosions could also draw attention (Luke 21:11; cf. Acts 2:19), but most signs in Luke-Acts cohere with Jesus's ministry to the socially marginal.

None of this suggests that Luke expected healing in every instance (Luke 4:27; 14:13; Acts 12:2; cf. 2 Tim 4:20); Luke depicts God's activity on the cutting edge of mission, not all circumstances.

UNITY OF LUKE-ACTS

Luke's Gospel and Acts recount a single, long story, connecting the gentile mission with and grounding it in Israel's heritage.³⁴⁰ Although Henry Cadbury was not the first to highlight the unity of Luke-Acts, it is his work that most effectively established this emphasis among scholars.³⁴¹ In the second half of the twentieth century several scholars underlined detailed parallels among the key figures in these volumes.³⁴² Acts opens with a secondary preface that clearly announces that it continues the Gospel (Acts 1:1).

This claim to unity does not imply that no differences exist between the two works, especially in sources, texture, and emphasis.³⁴³ Some question the volumes' unity of purpose;³⁴⁴ certainly the early church, in forming a

³⁴⁰ See, e.g., A. C. Clark, "The Role of the Apostles," pages 169–90 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 185–89; I. H. Marshall, "'Israel' and the Story of Salvation: One Theme in Two Parts," pages 340–57 in Moessner, *Heritage*; E. Richard, "Luke: Author and Thinker," pages 15–32 in Richard, *New Views*, 25–27. See also discussion on Luke's portrayal of Israel's story and of the gentile mission.

³⁴¹ See Cadbury, *Making*, esp. 10–11 (where he compares Samuel-Kings as a multivolume work in the LXX).

³⁴² M. D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964); more soberly, Talbert, *Patterns*; most thoroughly, Tannehill, *Acts*. Cf. also O'Toole, "Parallels between Jesus and Disciples"; Verheyden, *Unity*; Clark, *Parallel Lives*; J. R. Edwards, "Parallels and Patterns between Luke and Acts," *BBR* 27 (4, 2017): 485–501.

³⁴³ See, e.g., Marguerat, *Histoire*, 66–70; earlier, Dibelius, *Studies*, 3–4, 103. Yet Luke would not be the only writer to take a different approach in different volumes (see, e.g., Hecataeus in T. S. Brown, *Greek Historians*, 11).

³⁴⁴ Esp. M. C. Parsons and R. I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 45–83. Among others, Litwak, *Echoes*, 37–47, critiques their skepticism, objecting that they fail to define narrative unity and that they overlook many cues for the narrative's purpose. For one survey of the current discussion, see M. F. Bird, "The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion," *JNT* 29 (4, 2007): 425–48 (426–39).

four-Gospel canon, separated the volumes.³⁴⁵ The work's authorial design, however, points toward unity; classicists have used such methods to demonstrate the unity of ancient epics.³⁴⁶ Even the author's "thorough acquaintance" in Luke 1:3 likely points to Luke having the second volume in mind when he composed the first. Luke 24:47–53 announces what becomes the topic of the sequel.³⁴⁷ More open to question is whether the volumes share the same genre.³⁴⁸ As noted in my comments on genre, Luke's first volume may constitute a biographic volume in a two-volume history.

Even speeches demanded careful connections and construction, like a fine robe.³⁴⁹ Parallel biographies highlighted whatever connections between figures that the authors could find. Because ancient audiences could hear important works multiple times,³⁵⁰ they could pick up on connections in the narratives that modern readers sometimes miss.

Luke and Acts are each roughly the length of the longest standard scroll, between thirty-two and forty feet. By writing two volumes of roughly equal length (the Gospel has roughly 5 percent more words than the standard version of Acts), Luke emphasizes his plan to match the two volumes. Ancient writers by no means demanded symmetry in the size of volumes;³⁵¹ parallel volumes, however, were usually of roughly equal length.³⁵²

Narrative Parallels between Luke and Acts

Scholars noticed Luke's parallels between Peter and Paul at least as early as 1841.³⁵³ Such parallels were a major emphasis of the nineteenth-century

³⁴⁵ M. C. Parsons, "The Unity of Luke-Acts: Rethinking the *Opinio Communis*," pages 29–53 in *With Steadfast Purpose* (N. H. Keathley), 48–51. But contrast A. Gregory, "The Reception of Luke and Acts and the Unity of Luke-Acts," *JSNT* 29 (4, 2007): 459–72 (461–63).

³⁴⁶ C. H. Talbert, "Reading Chance, Moessner, and Parsons," pages 229–40 in Parsons and Tyson, *Cadbury, Knox, and Talbert*, 233; esp. Talbert, *Patterns*, 67–70.

³⁴⁷ Cf. this practice in, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 19.110.5; 20.113.5; cf. the spoof in Lucian, *True Story* 2.47.

³⁴⁸ See Parsons, "Unity: Rethinking," esp. 45–48.

³⁴⁹ See Fronto Naber, p. 211.

³⁵⁰ Hermogenes, *Method* 13.428.

³⁵¹ D. W. Palmer, "Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph," pages 1–29 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*, 5, on Sallust's monographs.

³⁵² See, e.g., the two volumes of Josephus's *Apion* or of Philo's *Moses*; cf. Aune, *Environment*, 117–18, citing Diodorus Siculus 1.29.6; 1.41.10.

³⁵³ M. Schneckenburger, *Über den Zweck der Apostelgeschichte: Zugleich eine Ergänzung der neueren Commentare* (Bern: Fischer, 1841), 52–58, noted in Brawley, *Luke-Acts and Jews*, 43 n. 26.

Tübingen school, now largely discredited on many other points. Some of Tübingen's critics retorted that such parallels were "created . . . by History herself,"³⁵⁴ a premise with some early support in Paul's own letters (Gal 2:7–9). Ancient historians generally believed that they discovered patterns in history, not that they created them out of whole cloth, and Luke believes he finds patterns in the way God used individuals in salvation history (see esp. Acts 7:37).

In addition to providing the narrative with cohesiveness, the selective repetition in these narratives reinforces the repeated themes, and conveys to Peter, Paul, and others the authoritative sort of character attached to Jesus, the biblical prophets, and Moses.³⁵⁵ Given the role of examples in ancient history and biography, the parallels also serve the paranetic function of showing how all followers of Christ should follow the model of his life, making these followers' patterns also paradigmatic for others (cf. 1 Cor 11:1; Eph 5:2, 25).

Granted, most details in either volume lack parallels in the other; Luke is weaving together smaller stories transmitted in his sources in different ways. Luke's Christology also demands some limitations; unlike Jesus, for example, Paul is not the object of proclamation (Acts 14:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:5)!

Luke's opening allusion to his previous work (Acts 1:1) would invite readers to keep that work in mind when reading Acts. Luke introduces us to his method of comparing figures from the start of his two-volume work, by obvious comparisons of Jesus and John the Baptist, the births of both of whom were introduced by Gabriel.³⁵⁶

Luke 1:11: the angel of the Lord appears (= Gabriel, 1:19)	1:26: the angel Gabriel appears
1:12: the vision's recipient troubled	1:29: the vision's recipient troubled
1:13: Do not be afraid	1:30: do not be afraid
1:13: reason for miracle	1:30: reason for miracle
1:13: child's name (John)	1:31: child's name (Jesus)

³⁵⁴ A. von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons; London: Williams & Norgate, 1909), xix.

³⁵⁵ Tannehill, *Acts*, 74–76.

³⁵⁶ For correspondence between Jesus and John, see Goulder, *Type*, 120–24, esp. 120; more fully, R. C. Tannehill, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 15–44, esp. 15–20.

1:15: child will be great	1:32: child will be great
1:15: filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb	1:35: conceived through the Holy Spirit ³⁵⁷
1:16–17: mission	1:32–33: mission
1:18: question	1:34: question
1:19–20: proof or explanation	1:35–37: proof or explanation
1:20: Zechariah muted for unbelief	1:38, 45: Mary praised for faith
1:80: child grows	2:40, 52: child grows ³⁵⁸

That the narrative portion of this two-volume work opens with such clear parallelism alerts hearers to be sensitive to further parallels later in the work. Hellenistic rhetorical and biographic *synkrisis* provide Luke a model, but so does biblical narrative, a canon that Luke shares with his ideal audience. Thus in this context, for example, Mary echoes Hannah:

1 Sam 2:1–10	Luke 1:46–55
God exalts lowly (2:1, 4–5, 8)	God exalts lowly (1:48, 52–53)
I rejoice in your salvation (2:1)	I rejoiced in God my savior (1:47)
No one holy like the Lord (2:2)	Holy is his name (1:49)
Proud brought down (2:3–5)	Proud brought down (1:51–53)
Humble exalted, proud brought down (2:4–5)	Humble exalted, proud brought down (1:52–53)
Celebration of God’s sovereignty in such reversals (2:3, 6–9)	Celebration of God’s sovereignty in such reversals (1:51–53)
Barren given children (2:5)	(Context: Elizabeth’s pregnancy)
Poor vs. rich (2:7–8)	Rich empty-handed (1:53)
Hungry vs. full (2:5)	Filled the hungry (1:53)
Poor displacing nobles (<i>dunastōn</i> , 2:8)	Brought down rulers (<i>dunastas</i> , 1:52)
	[same term]
Raises up from death (2:6)	(Implicit Lukan subtext?)
Shift from personal deliverance to God’s anointed king (2:10)	Shift from personal deliverance to Israel’s deliverance

³⁵⁷ For the contrasting role of the Spirit in John’s and Jesus’s prenatal experience, see W. B. Tatum, “The Epoch of Israel: Luke I–II and the Theological Plan of Luke-Acts,” *NTS* 13 (2, 1967): 184–95 (188–89).

³⁵⁸ H. Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History* (London: SPCK, 1967), 29, helpfully views the contrast between Mary and Zechariah in light of a series of contrasts, often between religious insiders and others, in the Gospel (Luke 7:36–50; 10:29–37; 14:15–24; 15:24–32; 18:9–14; 20:45–21:4).

Luke-Acts invites readers to see Jesus's followers emulating him (Luke 6:40; 10:16; Acts 9:4–5; 20:33–35). Parallels include the following, although these are merely a sample:³⁵⁹

Luke 3:21: Jesus praying before his baptism and the descent of the Spirit	Acts 1:14: the disciples praying before being baptized in the Spirit
Luke 3:21–22: Spirit on Jesus	Acts 2:1–4: Spirit on church
Luke 4:14–21: inaugural mission speech	Acts 2:14–39/13:16–41: inaugural mission speeches
Luke 4:40; 5:17; 8:46: healing many, power going forth unexpectedly	Acts 5:14–16/19:11–12; 28:9: healing many, power going forth unexpectedly
Luke 5:17–26: healing a paralytic	Acts 3:1–10/14:8–11: healing paralytics
Luke 5:29–6:11: opposition from Jewish leaders	Acts 4:1–8:3; 12:2–3/23:2, 15: opposition from Jewish leaders
Luke 8:40–56: raising the dead	Acts 9:36–41/20:9–12: raising the dead
Luke 7:1–10: God-fearing centurion	Acts 10: God-fearing centurion (cf. 27:1–3)
Luke 7:11–17: widow's son raised	Acts 9:36–43: widow raised (cf. the youth in 20:9–12)
Luke 5:30; 7:36–50; 15:2: pious criticism of fellowship with sinners	Acts 11:3: pious criticism of fellowship with sinners (cf. Paul's gentile mission inviting hostility)
Luke 9:51: Jesus's plan to journey to Jerusalem	Acts 19:21: Paul's plan to journey to Rome
Luke 13:33: warned of dangers in Jerusalem	Acts 20:23; 21:12: warned of dangers in Jerusalem
Luke 19:11, 28: determined to go	Acts 20:24; 21:15, 17: determined to go
Luke 19:36–38: triumphal entry	Acts 21:17–20; 28:15: triumphal entry to Rome, less to Jerusalem ³⁶⁰
Luke 19:45–48: enters temple	Acts 21:26: enters temple
Luke 20:27–39: hostile Sadducees reject resurrection	Acts 4:1–2/23:6–9: hostile Sadducees reject resurrection
Luke 22:15–38: Jesus's farewell speech ³⁶¹	Acts 20:18–35: Paul's farewell speech
Luke 22:66–71: arraigned before the Sanhedrin	Acts 6:8–15/22:30–23:10: arraigned before the Sanhedrin
Luke 22:69: provocative announcement of Son of Man at God's right hand	Acts 7:56: provocative announcement of Son of Man at God's right hand
Luke 23:34, 46: committing his spirit and praying for forgiveness of the persecutors	Acts 7:59–60: committing his spirit and praying for forgiveness of the persecutors

³⁵⁹ See further, e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 119; Lane, *Gentile Mission*, 69–72.

³⁶⁰ Some points, including this one, represent my own adaptations.

³⁶¹ Because the passage includes disciples' discussion, scholars may define its boundaries differently.

Luke 23:47: centurion recognizes God's attestation of Jesus's innocence	Acts 27:31-32, 43: centurion recognizes God's attestation of Paul's innocence
Jesus's four hearings (before a governor and, only in Luke, Herod)	Paul's four hearings (before Roman governors and before Herod Agrippa II)
Luke emphasizes the fulfilment of Scripture, pointing to a mission to the nations (Luke 24:44-47)	Luke emphasizes the fulfilment of Scripture, continuing a mission to the nations (Acts 28:25-28)

Peter-Paul Parallels

Scholars have offered a number of parallels between Peter and Paul in Acts such as the following samples:³⁶²

Peter	Paul
Sermon (2:22-39)	Sermon (13:26-41)
Healing of paralytic (3:1-10)	Healing of paralytic (14:8-11)
Sermon following healing, denying apostles' power (3:12-26, esp. 3:12)	Sermon following healing, denying apostles' power (14:15-17, esp. 14:15)
Filled with the Spirit in ministry (4:8)	Filled with the Spirit in ministry (13:9)
Healings through apostles without direct consent (5:15)	Healings through apostles' without direct consent (19:12)
Defended by a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin (5:34-39)	Defended by Pharisees in the Sanhedrin (23:9)
Appoints leaders through laying on hands (6:1-6)	Appoints leaders through laying on hands (14:23)
People receive Spirit through his hands (8:17)	People receive Spirit through his hands (19:6)
Confronting and superseding false prophets (8:18-24)	Confronting and superseding false prophets (13:6-11; 19:13-20)
Raising the dead (9:36-41)	Raising the dead (20:9-12)
Befriends centurion (10:24-48)	Befriends centurion (27:1-44)
Rejects gentile worship (10:26)	Rejects gentile worship (14:15; cf. 28:6)
Defends gentile mission in Jerusalem (11:4-17; 15:7-11)	Defends gentile mission in Jerusalem (15:4, 12; cf. 21:21-26; 22:21)
Imprisoned at a Jewish festival (12:4-7)	Imprisoned at a Jewish festival (22:24; cf. 20:16)
Miraculous release from prison (5:19; 12:6-11)	Miraculous release from prison (16:25-34)

³⁶² Cf. also parallels with Stephen: analogous charges (6:13-14; 21:20-21; 25:8) and stoning (7:59; 14:19).

Nevertheless, Luke sometimes omits parallels. No lepers are healed in Acts, nor does Paul still the storm in Acts 27 like Jesus in Luke 8:24–25; Paul is not crucified at the end of Acts; and though Peter may have been crucified historically, Luke neither carries Acts to that point chronologically nor retrojects that later event into an earlier place in his account. As a historian, Luke is still bound to his subject matter. Anyone who begins looking for parallels will quickly recognize that this is impossible for the majority of his information. On occasion, Luke's Gospel even omits parallels for Acts that Luke surely had available in Mark or Q.³⁶³

Parallels versus Historical Tradition?

Scholars often note Luke's use of the rhetorical technique of *synkrisis*, or comparison.³⁶⁴ Comparison of various figures was a standard rhetorical technique³⁶⁵ used also to explore narratives.³⁶⁶ Thus for example the Greek historian Polybius compared the Roman general Scipio with the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus, as a means of articulating Scipio's character more clearly.³⁶⁷

By comparing Paul to Jesus and Peter, Luke raises Paul's profile for those who already respect those figures. Writers did not always use comparisons to denigrate the object of comparison; comparison with a positive figure could elevate the one being compared.³⁶⁸ One could compare one's subject with famous people of the past to increase the status of one's subject.³⁶⁹

Did Luke revise his historical tradition to create parallels, or did he simply frequently include and highlight those traditions that proved useful

³⁶³ Note Mark 4:12 with Acts 28:25–27 (but cf. Luke 8:10); Mark 6:17–29 with Acts 24:24–26; Mark 7:18–19 with Acts 10:15; and Mark 14:58 with Acts 6:14. Sometimes writers forgot what they covered or promised to cover; e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 18.54; 20.53, 144, 147.

³⁶⁴ Marguerat, *Histoire*, 82–83; Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 118–19.

³⁶⁵ Theon, *Progymn.* 2.86–88; 10.3–7; Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.85; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.14.212; *Progymn.* 8 (Synkrisis), 18–20; Marshall, *Enmity*, 348–53; R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 110–11.

³⁶⁶ E.g., Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.21.149; Maximus of Tyre 26.5–6; Menander Rhetor 2.10, 417.10–11; Michael Martin, "Philo's Use of Synkrisis: An Examination of Philonic Composition in the Light of the Progymnasmata," *PRSt* 30 (3, 2003): 271–97.

³⁶⁷ Polybius 10.2.8–13; cf. 38.8.14–15.

³⁶⁸ See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 33; Fronto, *Ad Ant. Imp.* 1.2.4; Menander Rhetor 1.2, 353.9–10; 2.1–2, 376.31–377.2; 2.3, 380.21–22, 30–31; 2.10, 417.5–9, 13–17; Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 8. On Synkrisis 19–20.

³⁶⁹ E.g., Menander Rhetor 2.10, 416.2–4.

for parallels?³⁷⁰ Thucydides, Polybius, and Josephus all employ patterns of historical recurrence,³⁷¹ as does Israelite historiography (e.g., with Moses and Joshua, or Elijah and Elisha).³⁷² Other historians were often even more apt to draw attention to the patterns than does Luke.³⁷³

Some works did admittedly bend stories to conform them to each other. Cicero permitted historians to choose (though not to fabricate) traditions according to which ones best fit the parallels they sought to articulate.³⁷⁴ Plutarch complains that some writers added details missing elsewhere, for example composing a proper tragic finale for Alexander's life.³⁷⁵

Yet if we take them at their word, most ancient historians and biographers, who often drew on traditions known to their audiences, displayed their literary genius by finding parallels among available traditions rather than by inventing them. They believed they found these patterns in history, and they typically attributed to divine design.

Plutarch selected Greek and Roman figures that he could pair in biographies based on their stories appearing comparable in some ways.³⁷⁶ He opines that nature itself supplies sufficient events for observers to find parallels if only they are sufficiently attentive,³⁷⁷ and that the similarities he was able to find were due to the *divine* power making people alike in many respects.³⁷⁸ Yet, like Luke, he also tells distinctive stories about individuals he compares; he even highlights contrasts.³⁷⁹ Even when he says that two people are so much alike that it is difficult to discern the differences

³⁷⁰ Some sorts of stories may form parallels also because they may be told only in certain kinds of ways (B. E. Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 5).

³⁷¹ G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 97; C. Pelling, *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6–9; cf. S. Hornblower, “Thucydides,” *BNP* 14:631–37; G. S. Bucher, “Toward a Literary Evaluation of Appian’s *Civil Wars*, Book 1,” pages 454–60 in Marincola, *Companion*, 458–59.

³⁷² See, e.g., Hays, *Echoes*, 101, on Josh 3–4; for Elisha’s miracles evoking Elijah’s, see, e.g., N. Levine, “Twice as Much of Your Spirit: Pattern, Parallel and Paronomasia in the Miracles of Elijah and Elisha,” *JSOT* 85 (1999): 25–46; in Ps.-Philo, see J. M. Barclay, *Paul & the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 267–68.

³⁷³ Aune, *Environment*, 119; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 7.8.53.

³⁷⁴ Cicero, *Brutus* 11.42.

³⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Alex.* 70.3.

³⁷⁶ E.g., Plutarch, *Theseus* 1.2; cf. *Comparison of Theseus and Romulus*; *Comparison of Lucullus and Cimon*, in LCL 2:610–21).

³⁷⁷ Plutarch, *Sert.* 1.1–4.

³⁷⁸ Plutarch, *Dem.* 3.2. Polybius believed that his task as an historian was merely to report how Fortune had designed history (cf. Polybius 1.4.1–3).

³⁷⁹ E.g., *Comparison of Alcibiades and Coriolanus* 3.1; *Comparison of Lysander and Sulla* 5.5.

between them, the claim plainly exaggerates, because he does go on to point out differences.³⁸⁰

Rather than inventing parallels, Plutarch claims that he looked hard for the right people to compare with each other.³⁸¹ Because rhetoricians emphasized the importance of selectivity,³⁸² available parallels with another notable character could simply provide a criterion for selecting relevant points to record. Anyone can discover “parallels” among various characters in history after the fact.³⁸³

Similarly, earlier biblical literature, a key Lukan theological source, already often structured narratives in parallel patterns.³⁸⁴ The prophets’ picture of a new exodus (e.g., Isa 12:2; 40:3; Jer 31:32–33; Hos 2:15; 11:1, 5, 11) evoked its prototype.³⁸⁵ Indeed, even the Jordan crossing in Josephus deliberately echoes the sea crossing at the exodus.³⁸⁶ Later Jewish historians and storytellers also recounted their narratives along patterns from earlier salvation history, believing that God had objectively authored these patterns in history.³⁸⁷ Jewish eschatological literature even uses Eden as a prototype for the future.³⁸⁸

Even the seminal exodus narrative depends on the irony of narrative connections and contrasts: for example, in retribution for Egypt drowning Israel’s babies in the Nile (Exod 1:22), God turned the Nile to blood (7:17), slew Egypt’s firstborn (12:29–30), and drowned Egypt’s army (14:27–28).³⁸⁹

Does Luke invent stories to parallel or does he seek parallels in his sources? An obvious test case is Luke’s use of a source still extant: he finds parallels among some major characters in Israel’s history in Acts 7, without

³⁸⁰ *Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato* 1.1; 5.1, 3–4; 6.1; cf. also Hägg, *Biography*, 267.
³⁸¹ *Cimon* 3.1–3.

³⁸² E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 55; Valerius Maximus 2.7.5; 3.7. ext. 5; Menander Rhetor 2.4, 393.25–30.

³⁸³ Cf., e.g., P. Gray, *Opening Paul’s Letters: A Reader’s Guide to Genre and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 34, on Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy.

³⁸⁴ Satterthwaite, “Acts,” 363. On such patterns, see discussion in the introduction regarding Luke and the OT; also at Acts 7.

³⁸⁵ J. L. Kugel and R. A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (LEC 3; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986), 46–47.

³⁸⁶ Hays, *Echoes*, 101.

³⁸⁷ E.g., H. Jacobson, “Visions of the Past: Jews and Greeks,” *Judaism* 35 (4, 1986): 467–82, though wrongly contrasting Greek historians.

³⁸⁸ E.g., 4 Ezra 8:52–54; 9:5–6; *T. Dan* 5:12; *T. Levi* 18:10–12; *Sipra Behuqotai* pq. 3.263.1.5; Rev 22:2–3.

³⁸⁹ Cf. Wis 11:5–7.

inventing them. It is not difficult to deliberately highlight parallel features in genuine accounts if one's specific criterion for selecting many features is that they provide parallels.

Structure of Acts

Scholars identify various structural clues, with many schemes that may be complementary. The simplest, though not very symmetric, is based on Acts 1:8: movement from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, to (in Acts 13–28) the ends of the earth.

Another popular approach includes six panels divided by summary statements of the gospel's expansion (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20):

1. 1:1–6:7: the church in Jerusalem
2. 6:8–9:31: Judea and Samaria (cf. Acts 1:8)
3. 9:32–12:24: to gentiles (a nongeographic category)
4. 12:25–16:5: Asia and the shift to emphasizing the gentile mission
5. 16:6–19:20: Europe (returning also to Ephesus)
6. 19:21–28:31: to Rome

Also asymmetrically, another proposed outline structures the book according to the worldview of ancient Jewish geography: the mission to Shem (2:1–8:25); Ham (8:26–40); and Japheth (9:1–28:31).³⁹⁰

More symmetric and detailed could be:

- I. The first outpouring of the Spirit (1:1–2:47)
- II. Apostolic leadership in Jerusalem (3:1–5:42)
- III. Hellenist expansion (6:1–9:30)
 1. Hellenist leaders (6:1–7)
 2. Stephen (6:8–8:1a)
 3. Philip (8:1b–40)
 4. Saul the new witness (9:1–31)
- IV. Peter's ministry beyond Jerusalem (9:32–12:24)
- V. Paul's Diaspora missions (12:25–19:41)
 1. Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Phrygia (12:25–14:28)
 2. Ratifying the gentile mission (15:1–35)
 3. Paul and companions in Asia and Achaia (15:36–19:41)

³⁹⁰ J. M. Scott, "Luke's Geographical Horizon," pages 483–544 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 531.

- VI. To Rome via Jerusalem (20:1–28:31)
1. Journey to Jerusalem (20:1–21:16)
 2. Dangers in Jerusalem (21:17–23:35)
 3. Paul’s defense before authorities (24:1–26:32)
 4. Voyage to Rome (27:1–28:15)
 5. Continuing ministry in Rome (28:16–31)

What all these outlines have in common is geographic movement from Jerusalem to, ultimately, Rome and (implicitly) beyond.

Title

Our current title for Acts, “Acts of Apostles,” appears widely by the end of the second century.³⁹¹ The title’s first element, “Acts” is not inappropriate, given other works such as Valerius Maximus’s *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*. It is not, however, Luke’s title for the book: he rarely employs the term “acts” in this sense, but it fits the proliferation of apocryphal acts in second-century Christianity. The second element of the title, “of the Apostles,” is inaccurate. Acts does not pervasively emphasize the “apostles” (by which Luke means especially the Twelve);³⁹² their role at the beginning of the narrative apparently led real readers to overestimate their centrality to the narrative.³⁹³

³⁹¹ Commentators cite Irenaeus, *Her.* 3.12.11; 3.13.3 (cf. 3.14.1); Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.82.4; Tertullian, *Bapt.* 10.4; anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke; the Muratorian Canon; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.4.6.

³⁹² Contrast the broader Pauline sense of apostles (cf. Rom 1:1; 16:7; 1 Cor 9:2; 12:28–29; 15:5–7; Gal 1:19; 1 Thess 2:7).

³⁹³ M. C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* (JSNTSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 184.

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III Commentary



1:1–2 PREFACE

Fulfilling promises by OT prophets and Jesus himself, the exalted Lord pours out God's Spirit on his witnesses, initiating cross-cultural witness and carrying on Jesus's mission. Acts 1–2, which describes the first outpouring of the Spirit, is the introductory section that lays the groundwork for the rest of Acts. It is thus treated here in greater detail than space allows for subsequent chapters. Writers often introduced their main themes at the beginning of a work or section,¹ including in narrative works.²

Acts 1:1–11 provides a narrative introduction to Luke's second volume, a recapitulation of the final scene of his first volume, and on the level of his narrative functions as a transition from Jesus to the church.

Before the Spirit is poured out (2:1–47), the exact contours of the group of apostolic witnesses are carefully defined (1:15–26). The transition between volumes 1 and 2, then, is a transition of leadership from Jesus to the apostles (the Spirit working through both), and from Jesus's active ministry in person to his continuing ministry through his name (2:38; 3:6) and (most regularly emphasized in Acts) the Spirit (2:33). The empowerment of the Spirit is foundational for the rest of the church's mission, as is clear from the warning not to leave Jerusalem without it (1:4).

Some have noted a distinctly Semitic character to the language in Acts 1–15, though few today follow C. C. Torrey's thesis of a continuous Aramaic source behind it. Luke's Semitisms may sometimes recall his sources but probably often recall Septuagintal style in exclusively Jewish

¹ See, e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436a.33–39; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 24; Hermogenes, *Method* 12.427; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.2 (following his retrospective in 2.1).

² See, e.g., Polybius 3.1.3–3.5.9 (following his retrospective in 3.1.1–2); Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thucyd.* 19.

settings. Rhetoricians advised varying style according to the subject matter, and Luke demonstrates his stylistic versatility by using more “biblical Greek” in Jerusalem (where his audience would expect such style) and a “higher” Greek, climaxing in Acts 17, in the Diaspora. This is the same method Luke employs in the first two chapters of his Gospel, as a method of deliberate archaizing meant to parallel Greek writers’ “Atticizing” style.

Recapitulation

As if to make absolutely clear that his second volume is a continuation of the first, Acts 1:2–11 provides a recapitulation of the narrative conclusion of Luke’s first volume (Luke 24:47–51). Other narrative works sometimes (though not always) included such recapitulations, especially at the beginning of another volume.³ Material often overlaps in recapitulations.⁴

Luke’s recapitulation of Luke 24:39–53 at the beginning of his new book includes some differences. Sometimes historians reported divergent accounts from their tradition, but literary freedom apparently plays the greater role here. Rhetorical custom emphasized stylistic variation when retelling a matter.⁵ The retelling also provides information missing earlier; for example, whereas Luke 24 telescopes events as if they might have all happened in one day (Luke 24:1, 13, 28, 36, 50), Acts presents a longer period (as suggested also by Matt 28:16; Jn 20:26; 21:1; 1 Cor 15:5–8).⁶

Preface

The *literary preface* by ancient standards was Acts 1:1 or 1:1–2,⁷ but it is grammatically connected with the rest of the introduction,⁸ which is 1:1–11 or (less likely) 1:1–14. The larger opening bloc as a whole extends until 2:47. Not only the introduction proper but also the opening scenes up to the first

³ E.g., Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.1; Chariton, *Chaer.* 5.1.1–2; Aune, *Environment*, 90, 117; Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 368, citing Herodotus 1.42; 2.1.1–3; 3.1.1–3; 8.1.1–6; some cite also 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 and Ezra 1:1–3.

⁴ Lucian, *Hist.* 55.

⁵ Cf. Wright, *People of God*, 378, comparing Josephus.

⁶ Luke thereby also alerts the reader to look for new information in the retelling of other accounts in Acts (esp. the conversions of Paul and Cornelius).

⁷ Historical prefaces were ideally brief (Lucian, *Hist.* 23).

⁸ Luke smooths his transition to the narrative, as rhetoricians advised (e.g., Seneca, *Controv.* 1.1.25; Lucian, *Hist.* 55).

summary statement (2:41–47) address the transition from Jesus’s ministry to that of the “successors” of his mission narrated in the Gospel.⁹

The abridged preface (1:1) may imply this transition in “all that Jesus *began* to do and teach.”¹⁰ Jesus’s promise of the Spirit so the apostles will be witnesses closes Luke’s Gospel (Luke 24:48–49) and opens Acts (1:4–8) as Jesus departs (1:9–11). Luke highlights this transition with motifs from the biblical account of the transition from Elijah’s to Elisha’s ministry.

A preface normally did not consume the entire introductory section of a work. Thus, for example, Polybius has an opening preface, but the entire first two volumes of his work (which originally comprised thirty-nine volumes) constitute his introduction.¹¹

Historians could omit full prefaces when the subject matter was sufficiently familiar to the ideal audience to require no detailed explanation, as would be the case with Luke’s second volume.¹² The preface to a two-volume work could cover both volumes,¹³ though “secondary prologues” like Acts 1:1 were common in new volumes.¹⁴ In such cases, the second volume’s preface was typically briefer and summarized the previous volume.¹⁵ Luke’s secondary preface here presupposes the fuller preface in Luke 1:1–4.

Greek historians typically used some stock topoi in their prefaces, including the following also present in Luke:

1. Dedications (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1)
2. Brief discussion of predecessors (Luke 1:1)
3. Discussion of and claim to using proper methods (Luke 1:3)

Historians should also note their topic (as in Luke 1:1: “the events that have been fulfilled among us,” a historical topic), that their work will be useful (cf. 1:4), and that their exposition of it will be easy to follow (“orderly,”

⁹ Cf. S. Walton, “Where Does the Beginning of Acts End?” pages 447–67 in Verheyden, *Unity* (esp. 466). In some genres, “prologues” could prove quite lengthy (B. Zimmermann, “Prologue,” *BNP* 12:2–4).

¹⁰ A good transition could summarize what came before while introducing what would come next (*Rhet. Her.* 4.26.35).

¹¹ Polybius 2.71.7; cf. 2 Macc 2:32; Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1. pref.

¹² Lucian, *Hist.* 52.

¹³ E.g., Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* pref. 479.

¹⁴ E.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 3.1.1; 9.1.1; Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 3. pref.

¹⁵ See Lucian, *Hist.* 55; Johnson, *Acts*, 28, citing Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.1 and 2.1.

1:3).¹⁶ Like others, Luke may intend his preface to serve three primary functions:¹⁷

1. Securing audience favor
2. Securing their attention
3. Preparing them to receive instruction

Writers often summarized or referred back to their previous volumes, especially at the start of a new one.¹⁸ This was especially valuable when one deliberately paired one's work with a previous one.¹⁹ Acts 1:1 literally depicts the first volume as what Jesus "began" to do and teach; although this could possibly be a simple Semitism, Luke's usage suggests more likely that Luke envisions Acts as what Jesus continued to do and teach through his name and his Spirit.

One might pause at various intervals in one's work to honor one's dedicatee with further mentions,²⁰ especially when moving from one book to another,²¹ as here. One could dedicate a work to a peer²² or to a superior,²³ sometimes hoping to get the latter to read the work.²⁴ Sometimes a writer would dedicate a work to a person who expressed special interest in the subject (cf. Luke 1:4).²⁵

Against some, "Theophilus" is not simply a symbolic name ("lover of God"); ancient works did not have symbolic dedicatees, especially with titles (as in Luke 1:3), and the name Theophilus (like other Theo- names) was extremely common, including among Diaspora Jews.²⁶

¹⁶ Lucian, *Hist.* 53.

¹⁷ See Lucian, *Hist.* 53; Aune, *Environment*, 90.

¹⁸ E.g., Polybius 2.1.1; 3.1.1–2.

¹⁹ As in Philo, *Good Person* 1.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Isis* 1, 3, *Mor.* 351C, 352C.

²¹ E.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 1.1.1; 3.1.1; 3.2.6; Velleius Paterculus 1.13.5; 2.7.5; 2.49.1; 2.65.3; 2.96.2; 2.101.3; 2.104.2; 2.113.1; 2.130.4; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4. pref. 1; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.1; 2.1; Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 3. pref.; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.1.126.

²² E.g., Cicero, *Att.* 13.12, 21a, 23; 14.21; *Fam.* 8.3.2; Antonius Diogenes, *Thule* 110a–111b.

²³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 1; Quintilian, *Inst.* 1. pref. 6; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.1; 2.296; *Life* 430; Plutarch, *S.K.*, pref., *Mor.* 172BC; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* pref. 479.

²⁴ Phaedrus 3. prologue; cf. Pliny, *Nat.* pref. 6, 12.

²⁵ Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1 *Amm.* 2; 2 *Amm.* 1; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 1.1; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.296; *Ant.* 1.8; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.1.1–2; Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 117–22; Keener, *Acts*, 1:653–57.

²⁶ See, e.g., *CJ* 1:lxvii; *CPI* 1:xix; 1:148; 2:117; 3:176–78.

Theophilus's title "most excellent" (Luke 1:3) probably implies status (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25).²⁷ A person of status, or at least his name, could commend the work to others; "publication" often began with public readings at banquets.²⁸ Since even the initial copy of Luke's work probably cost more than \$4,000 in today's currency,²⁹ support with cost or circulation could help. (Sometimes, but by no means always, a dedicatee was also the author's patron.)³⁰ No one, however, intended the dedicatee to be the only reader of a published work.³¹

Volume 1 narrates Jesus's deeds and teachings until his "taking up" (Acts 1:2; cf. 1:11, 22), i.e., his ascension (Luke 24:51; cf. 9:51), the exaltation to the Father's right hand, from which he may bestow the Spirit (Acts 2:33–35). The choosing of the first apostles points back to Jesus's actions in Luke 6:12–16, preparing also for his choice of a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:24 (cf. other divine choices in 9:15; 15:7). His *instructions* in 1:2 include waiting in Jerusalem (1:4; Luke 24:49).

1:3–8: PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke first summarizes Jesus's postresurrection appearances to the Twelve and his teaching to them, which involves especially the "kingdom" (1:3). He then elaborates in more detail the closely related promise of the Spirit, God's empowerment for the witnesses' mission from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. This empowerment is the implicit (and often explicit) driving force behind the narrative's movement from Jerusalem to Rome, carrying its heritage into its mission and future.

Offering confirmation to Theophilus (Luke 1:4), Luke notes that Jesus's forty days of appearances provide convincing proofs as well as postresurrection teaching. Greeks spoke of divine apparitions, but not continuing

²⁷ As in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ancient Orators* 1.1; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.1; *Life* 430; Avianus, *Fables*, introductory letter, line 1; perhaps here as a courtesy title (as with Felix in 23:26). One might flatter an addressee (cf. Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1. pref.; Statius, *Silv.* 2. pref.; 2.2).

²⁸ Cf. Cicero, *Att.* 2.1; 12.44; Nepos 25 (Atticus), 14.1; Seneca, *Controv.* 1. pref. 19; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 95.2; Statius, *Silv.* 2. pref.; Diogenes Laertius 1.122.

²⁹ Cf. E. R. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 167–70.

³⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 1; Horace, *Ep.* 1.1.1–3; *Sat.* 1.1.1–3; *Ode* 1.1; Phaedrus 3. epilogue.8–1.

³¹ See, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2 *Amm.* 1; *Thuc.* 2; *Comp.* 1; Josephus, *Ap.* 1.1–3; 2.296; *Life* 430.

for weeks, usually not with recent witnesses, and never with serial demonstrations of bodily presence such as eating together (Luke 24:37–43).³²

As Jesus was tempted for forty days before his public ministry, now he spends forty days with his disciples before theirs.³³ Jesus continued with his disciples for a period of time before parting from them (1 Cor 15:5–8; Matt 28:16; John 20:26; 21:1). Forty days allows time for these Galileans' unsurprising return home before returning to Jerusalem, hence for both Galilean (Mark 14:28; 16:7; Matt 26:32; 28:7, 10, 16; John 21:1) and Judean (John 20:1–29) appearances.³⁴

The *kingdom* (1:3) appears in Acts especially in summaries of preaching (e.g., 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; Luke 4:43; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 60; 10:9; 16:16), because Luke has already addressed it more fully in his Gospel (cf. *all that Jesus . . . taught* in 1:1). Most conspicuously in Acts, references to the kingdom include two teaching summaries that frame the message of this book (Acts 1:3, 6; 28:23, 31). Jewish teachers could speak of God's present reign among his people,³⁵ but also looked for God's more complete future reign.³⁶ Recognizing Jesus as the promised king, his followers naturally envisioned

³² For angels in disguise, see, e.g., Gen 18; Tob 5:4–6, 12; 9:1–5; *Sipre Deut.* 38.1.4; for them not needing to eat, see, e.g., *T. Ab.* 4:9–10 A (cf. 6:5). Gentiles also acknowledged phantoms (e.g., Homer, *Il.* 5.449–53; Apollodorus, *Epit.* 3.5; Plutarch, *Caes.* 69.5, 8), an association refuted here.

³³ Forty days of seeking revelation would also recall Moses (Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10; *Jub.* 1:4) and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8).

³⁴ Luke simplifies his narrative by omitting travel to Galilee (and Mark 16:7). Such simplification was common in ancient historiography; see, e.g., F. G. Downing, "Redaction Criticism: Josephus' *Antiquities* and the Synoptic Gospels (I)," *JSNT* 8 (1980): 46–65 (56); C. B. R. Pelling, "Plutarch's Adaptation of His Source-Material," *JHS* 100 (1980): 127–40 (127–28); Licona, *Differences*, 20, 36, 39, 52, 72, 98, 108. Compare, e.g., Justin, *Epit.* 6.8.1 with 6.8.13; or Acts 12:23 with Josephus, *Ant.* 19.350. The tradition lacked reason to emphasize Galilee if the disciples never went there; yet Galileans often traveled to Jerusalem, and Paul also attests Jerusalem as the center of the mission (Rom 15:19; Gal 1:17–18; 2:1). Close disciples would remain in Jerusalem after the crucifixion because of the seven-day mourning period (cf. Sir 22:12; Jdt 16:24; S. Safrai, "Home and Family," 728–92 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 782). If Jesus and his disciples arrived in Jerusalem as much as a week before Passover (Luke 19:28; 21:37; 22:7), the disciples might have arrived early for Pentecost, even had they lacked specific instructions. Of course, Luke's focus on the church's Judean heritage and his own urban Aegean cultural sphere render him much more enthusiastic about the biblically familiar and urban Jerusalem.

³⁵ E.g., *m. Ber.* 2:2; *Sipra Aharé Mot* pq. 13.194.2.1; *Sipra Qedoshim* pq. 9.207.2.13; cf. Ps 145:2; 146:10.

³⁶ E.g., Isa 9:6–7; 24:23; 52:7; Dan 7:14; Zech 14:9; 1QSB 5.21; 4Q246 fi.ii.5; *Jub.* 1:28; Ps. Sol. 17:5; 2 Bar. 73:1; *Sib. Or.* 3.767; *T. Mos.* 10:1; *Mek. Shirata* 10.42–45; *Sipra Behuqotai* pq. 8.269.2.3.

the kingdom as partly “already” (cf. Luke 13:18–21; 16:16; 17:20–21; 18:16–17) and partly “not yet” (cf. 11:2; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 18).

Promise of the Spirit (1:4–5)

The transition from Jesus to his movement, a transition on which the two volumes pivot, underlines the absolute necessity of empowerment for mission. Just as Jesus did not begin his public ministry before receiving the Spirit (Luke 3:22–23; 4:18; Acts 10:38), his disciples must depend on God’s empowerment and should not even attempt their mission without it.³⁷ The Spirit is the foretaste of the kingdom and the empowerment to prepare a people for it. The Spirit thus enables the witnesses to carry on Jesus’s mission after his ascension, just as Elisha received a double portion of the Spirit to carry on Elijah’s work after his ascension.

Jesus commands his apostles to wait in Jerusalem only until they receive the promise of the Father (1:4). That they (mostly)³⁸ remain in Jerusalem as late as 15:2–6 may suggest that either they expect the end-time to bring foreigners to them (cf. Isa 2:2; 11:10; 49:22; 60:3; 66:20) or, more likely, they want to complete the end-time Jerusalem phase of the mission, using that as their home base, before moving on to the next phase (Acts 1:6; 3:19–21).

The Father’s *promise* (1:4) recalls Luke 24:49, being clothed with power from “on high,” which in turn evokes Isa 32:15.³⁹ In Hebrew, Scripture also spoke of being “clothed” with the Spirit (Judg 6:34; 1 Chron 12:18; 2 Chron 24:20).⁴⁰ The promise is for all who will repent (Acts 2:38), including the “far off” gentiles (2:39).

The promise of being baptized in the Spirit (1:5) recalls John’s prophecy about Jesus’s mission in Luke 3:16. In earlier Scripture, only God can pour out God’s own Spirit, so Jesus here fulfills a divine role (cf. Acts 2:17–18 with 2:33). Whereas Jesus will baptize the wicked in fiery judgment (Luke

³⁷ Cf. 13:2; Luke 10:38–41; 11:13; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Pet 1:12; Mark 13:11; John 15:26–27; Rev 19:10.

³⁸ See Acts 9:32–10:48. After Acts 15, the Twelve do not appear in Jerusalem (21:18; cf. 1 Cor 9:5; 1 Pet 1:1).

³⁹ Earlier, see Luke 11:13; Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:26–27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29; perhaps Zech 12:10; C. J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 121–56. The “promise” of the Spirit (cf. Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13) may foreshadow the full future promises (Acts 7:17; 13:32–33; 26:6–7).

⁴⁰ Cf. also LAB 27:9–10; *b. Meg.* 14b; for being clothed with other qualities, cf., e.g., Isa 61:3, 10; 4 Macc 6:2.

3:9, 16–17), he baptizes the righteous in the Spirit (Luke 3:16). The Spirit provides continuity between the ministry in both volumes:⁴¹

1. The Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22), and Jesus “baptizes” in the Spirit (Luke 3:16).
2. Both Jesus and his followers are praying when the Spirit comes (Luke 3:21; Acts 1:14; contrast Mk 1:9; Matt 3:13–15).
3. The Spirit descends (Luke 3:22; Acts 2:33).
4. There is a visible manifestation with the Spirit (Luke 3:22; Acts 2:3).
5. The ensuing public ministries open with sermons that introduce themes for the rest of the book (Luke 4:18–27; Acts 2:14–40).
6. Hardship and opposition follow Spirit-empowerment (Luke 4:1, 14; Acts 4:7–8).

Being “baptized” in the Spirit (1:5; 11:16) is also called “receiving” the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:33, 38; 10:47), experiences that continue in Acts (8:15, 17; 19:2). Although this experience is theologically implicit in conversion (Acts 2:38–39; 11:16–17; cf. Luke 3:16),⁴² Luke’s narrative sometimes reveals believers experiencing it later (Acts 8:12–17; cf. 2:4; 9:17; 19:5–6),⁴³ possibly because Luke emphasizes a particular dimension of pneumatology, namely, prophetic empowerment (cf. 1:8; 2:17–18).⁴⁴ That is, some dimensions of the Spirit’s work available in conversion might be experienced more fully subsequently.

The promise would be fulfilled *not many days from now* (1:5); Jesus had been with them forty days (1:3), and Pentecost is just fifty days after Passover (Lev 23:15–16).

Jesus was teaching the disciples both about the Spirit (1:4–5) and about the kingdom (1:3); the disciples would understand both concepts eschatologically. The prophets had regularly linked God pouring out his Spirit with the time of Israel’s restoration (e.g., Isa 32:15; 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:24–28; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–3:1), as Luke has already made clear

⁴¹ Cf. Talbert, *Patterns*, 16; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 51.

⁴² See J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (SBT, 2nd ser., 15; London: SCM, 1970), passim; M. Turner, “Spirit of Prophecy as Power,” 339–47.

⁴³ Cf. F. F. Bruce, “The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles,” *Interpretation* 27 (2, 1973): 166–83; Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 148–52; see comment on Acts 8:16. Similarly, Luke treats Jesus’s resurrection and exaltation as a theological unity (Acts 2:31–33) yet distinguishes them chronologically (1:3).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 192; Menzies, *Empowered*, 106–228; Menzies, *Development*, 205–77; more nuanced, Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, 136, 162–95.

(Luke 4:18–19, quoting Isaiah 61:1–2). Luke also leads us to expect that Jesus has been discussing such passages, since he has been explaining the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44–45). This explanation includes teaching about himself (24:46) probably fleshed out for us in apostolic sermons in Acts 2:16–39; 7:2–53; 13:17–47, but also in texts alluded to here. Acts 1:8 may borrow some language from Isa 32:15 LXX (as in Luke 24:49) and especially passages about the Spirit empowering Israel as God’s witnesses in the end-time.⁴⁵

Thus the disciples naturally ask what seems, from their solely future eschatological perspective, the obvious question: When will Jesus restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6)? Luke apparently does expect such a restoration – just not on the schedule the disciples assume (1:7; 3:21, 25–26; 15:16; 26:7; Luke 1:32–33, 54–55, 68–75; 2:38; 22:29–30).⁴⁶ Rather than gentiles being converted after Jesus’s future enthronement in Jerusalem, this would occur beforehand.⁴⁷ Eschatology frames the transition from Jesus’s presence to the disciples’ mission: they ask about the time of Israel’s restoration (1:6) and angels declare the bodily character of Jesus’s future return (1:11). Jesus does not deny a restoration, but warns against the sort of detailed chronological map offered in some apocalyptic sources (1:7).⁴⁸ As in apocalyptic literature, however, God remains in control of *the times or periods* (cf. Dan 2:21; 1 Thess 5:1).⁴⁹

Power for Mission (1:8)

Like Luke’s other key programmatic texts echoing Scripture (Luke 4:18–19; 24:45–48; Acts 2:17–18), 1:8 involves the Spirit empowering God’s agents for mission. Most scholars recognize that the activity of the Spirit emphasized most in Acts is empowering witnesses for their mission (e.g., Acts 1:8;

⁴⁵ Isa 43:9–12; 44:3, 8–9; see Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*.

⁴⁶ Including a future banquet with Abraham (Luke 13:28–29; 22:16, 18, 29–30; cf. 14:15). Elsewhere, cf., e.g., Isa 60:1–3; Jer 31:27–40; Hos 14:4–7; Amos 9:11–15; Rom 11:15–26; Matt 23:39; in early Judaism, see, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 96–98.

⁴⁷ Cf. Rom 10:19; 11:11–14; Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 229. For the salvation of gentiles, see, e.g., Isa 2:3–4; 19:21–25; 25:6; 56:3–8; Zeph 3:9; Zech 2:11.

⁴⁸ E.g., 1 *En.* 89; *b. Sanh.* 97b–98a.

⁴⁹ E.g., 1 *En.* 75:3; 2 *Bar.* 48:2. Others acknowledged that the final time remained secret (e.g., *Ps. Sol.* 17:21; 1QpHab 7.12–14); later rabbis debated whether Israel’s repentance could hasten the end (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 94a; *b. B. Bat.* 10a; *B. Mes.* 85b; perhaps already *Jub.* 23:26–27) or whether God has established that time, or both.

2:17–18; 4:8, 31; 7:51; 8:29, 39–40; 10:38; 11:12; 13:2, 4, 9; 16:6–7).⁵⁰ Jesus frames this mission as a promise rather than as a command,⁵¹ and this mission will be successful, because “the most reliable of characters” has promised it.⁵²

The promise here applies in the first case to “the Eleven and their companions” (Luke 24:33),⁵³ the first “witnesses” (24:48; Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31). Nevertheless, they are paradigmatic for all who will be “witnesses” (22:15, 18, 20; 23:11; 26:16; Luke 21:13) of what they experience (Acts 2:33; 22:15), because the promise of the Spirit is for all believers (2:38–39; cf., e.g., 4:31; 6:3, 5, 10; 7:55; 8:15–17; 9:17, 31; 10:44–47; 11:24, 28).⁵⁴ Acts remains open-ended: the mission to which it testifies continues (cf. 28:28).

They receive “power” (1:8; cf. 4:33; Luke 24:49), elsewhere associated with the Spirit (Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14; Acts 10:38).⁵⁵ In Luke-Acts, such “power” presumably at least partly implies healing and deliverance (Luke 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; Acts 6:8; 10:38), a major means of drawing attention to the message of the kingdom (e.g., 14:3). Traveling merchants, preachers, and even priests spread their religions as they traveled; Jews also welcomed proselytes. But mission here is more central and requires more direct dependence on divine activity.

Being witnesses to the nations is also grounded in the OT: the mission of God’s eschatological people (Isa 43:9–12; 44:8–9), and “the ends of the earth” (Isa 41:5, 9; 43:6; 45:22; 52:10).⁵⁶ Especially in view is Isa 49:6, which also applies to the gentile mission in Acts 13:46–47. As Acts moves from

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Hull, *Spirit in Acts*; I. H. Marshall, “The Significance of Pentecost,” *SJT* 30 (4, 1977): 347–69; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*; J. B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); J. M. Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (JPTSup 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Bovon, *Theologian*, 198–238; Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 97–108, 192.

⁵¹ Gaventa, *Acts*, 175 (though cf. Pervo, *Acts*, 41).

⁵² Parsons, *Departure*, 155.

⁵³ I.e., more than the Eleven; see R. J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word* (AnBib 82; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 291.

⁵⁴ The language of “witness” was no longer restricted to forensic contexts, but it does signify verification. Cf. Trites, *Witness*, 129–33.

⁵⁵ Cf. Mic 3:8; Zech 4:6; Rom 1:4; 15:13, 19; 1 Cor 2:4; Eph 3:16; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:7; *LAB* 27:10; *Tg. Jon.* on Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19.

⁵⁶ Luke deliberately weaves an allusion to Isa 52:10 into his new exodus quotation in Luke 3:4–6, adding to both Isa 40:3–5 and Luke’s Markan source. For cross-cultural witness being rooted also in Jesus’s message, see, e.g., M. F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission* (LNTS 331; London: T&T Clark, 2006), passim, esp. 1–3, 172.

Jerusalem to Rome, so does the theme of 1:6–8 shift from Israel's restoration to the gentile mission. Nevertheless, the Spirit must do further work to make the disciples understand this mission (Acts 10:19, 28, 45–48; 11:15–18). YHWH's witnesses in Isaiah become Jesus's witnesses in 1:8, again implying his divinity (see 2:17–18, 21, 33, 38).⁵⁷

Skilled writers sometimes stated their topic at the beginning of books.⁵⁸ Acts 1:8 offers a very rough and asymmetric outline for the rest of Acts,⁵⁹ as well as introducing major themes in Acts. It was considered appropriate, as in 1:8, to divide one's material into several topics, then treat them in succession;⁶⁰ historians sometimes outlined main events in advance.⁶¹ Luke presupposes some basic geographic knowledge, some from the Septuagint⁶² and some from his ideal, urban Aegean audience's sphere of knowledge. When Luke mentions, for example, the regions the Spirit did not allow Paul to enter (Acts 16:6–7) or the landmark Samothrace (Acts 16:11), Luke expects his ideal audience to encounter the allusions as more than a set of unfamiliar names.

Jerusalem (1:8; cf. 1:4–7:60) was central to the mission (Rom 15:19)⁶³ and in Jewish thought. Whereas Greeks regarded Delphi as the world's navel,⁶⁴ many Jews assigned that role to Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Because one feminine definite article covers both *Judea* (in this instance meaning, “the rest of the Jewish homeland inhabited by Jews”) and *Samaria* we should think of them

⁵⁷ Cf. Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (LNTS 367; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 82.

⁵⁸ E.g., Thucydides 1.23.6; Pliny, *Nat.* 8.1.1; 18.1.1; 33.1.1; 34.1.1; 36.1.1; 37.1.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.1; 8.1. See the advice in Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.137; Theon, *Progymn.* 1.60; 2.91–104; 11.2–6, 240–43; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.4.1–2.

⁵⁹ With, e.g., Hengel, “Geography,” 35; J. Schröter, “Zur Stellung der Apostelgeschichte im Kontext der antiken Historiographie,” pages 27–47 in *Die Apostelgeschichte im Kontext antiker und frühchristlicher Historiographie* (ed. J. Frey, C. K. Rothschild, and J. Schröter; BZNWK 162; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 47; Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 27–28.

⁶⁰ E.g., Gorgias, *Hel.* 6; Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 375.7–8; 385.8; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.1.126–29.

⁶¹ See Polybius 3.1.7; 11.1.4–5; Velleius Paterculus 2.129.1; Lucian, *Hist.* 53; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 19.

⁶² Of the seventy-four place names found in both the LXX and the NT, Acts uses fifty-three (72 percent) of them (Scott, “Horizon,” 524). His Galilean geography appears weak (Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the History of Earliest Christianity* [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983], 97–128), but that was true even for most Jerusalemites (Hengel, “Geography,” 33 n. 19).

⁶³ Although one might start first where one finds oneself, which in Paul's case was *technically* Damascus before Jerusalem (Acts 26:20; Gal 1:17).

⁶⁴ E.g., Euripides, *Med.* 667–68; *Orest.* 591; Pindar, *Pyth.* 4.74; 8.59–60; 11.10; contrast Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 67.11–14.

⁶⁵ E.g., Ezek 5:5; 38:12; *Jub.* 8:12, 19; *Sib. Or.* 5.249–50; *b. Sanh.* 37a.

together as the next stage of the mission (Acts 8:1–11:18). The *ends of the earth* is thus everywhere else (11:19–30; 13:1–28:31).⁶⁶

How would Luke's probably Aegean audience have envisioned the ends of the earth? Noting that Acts concludes in Rome (Acts 28:16–31), some suggest that for Judeans, Rome itself could seem the western ends of the earth, and they note one Jewish source that could be (but is not always) understood that way.⁶⁷ Far more often, however, people wrote of Spain (especially Gades) as the western ends of the earth.⁶⁸ Some paired Spain and India as the western and eastern ends of the earth.⁶⁹ (This might inform Paul's intense interest in reaching Spain in Rom 15:24, 28.)⁷⁰ Parts of Spain were quite Romanized,⁷¹ though some earlier elements persisted in local culture.

To the northwest, some spoke of Thule, beyond Britannia, as the ends of the earth.⁷² Distant peoples to the northeast included Scythians.⁷³ Rome had trade ties with China, although, because of its greater distance, they did not know it as well as India.⁷⁴ Rome had trade ties as far south as Tanzania⁷⁵ and as far southeast as what are now Vietnam, Malaysia, and Java, Indonesia.⁷⁶ Mediterranean sources regularly depicted Nubia as at the southern ends of the earth.⁷⁷ The African court official's conversion prophetically symbolizes the future African mission to the southern ends of the

⁶⁶ This vindicates Paul's gentile mission (see Brawley, *Luke-Acts and Jews*, 28–50).

⁶⁷ *Ps. Sol.* 8:15; cf. more generally *Sib. Or.* 4.102–3.

⁶⁸ Strabo 1.1.5, 8; 3.2; Seneca, *Nat.* 1. pref. 13; Silius Italicus 1.270; 15.638; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.3.8; *Greek Anth.* 4.3.84–85; cf. 1 *Clem.* 5.5–7.

⁶⁹ Strabo 1.1.8; Seneca, *Nat.* 1. pref. 13; Juvenal, *Sat.* 10.1–2.

⁷⁰ Cf. 1 *Clem.* 5.5–7.

⁷¹ Cf., e.g., J. F. Donahue, "Iunia Rustica of Cartima: Female Munificence in the Roman World," *Latomus* 63 (4, 2004): 873–91; S. Keay, "Recent Archaeological Work in Roman Iberia (1990–2002)," *JRS* 93 (2003): 146–211.

⁷² E.g., Seneca, *Medea* 379; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.16.104.

⁷³ Seneca, *Medea* 483. Mythography depicted the Hyperboreans furthest north; cf., e.g., Herodotus 4.32, 36; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.12.89.

⁷⁴ For India, e.g., Petronius, *Sat.* 38; Pliny, *Nat.* 9.54.106–9.54.109; 12.41.84; Pausanias 3.12.4; M. Wheeler, *Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1954), 115–71; Casson, *Mariners*, 204–5; for China, e.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 12.1.2; 12.41.84; Casson, *Mariners*, 198, 205–6; K. Herbert, "The Silk Road: The Link between the Classical World and Ancient China," *CBull* 73 (2, 1997): 119–24; L. Ying, "Ruler of the Treasure Country: The Image of the Roman Empire in Chinese Society from the First to the Fourth Century AD," *Latomus* 63 (2, 2004): 327–39.

⁷⁵ Casson, *Mariners*, 203.

⁷⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 205.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Strabo 1.1.6; comment on Acts 8:27.

earth.⁷⁸ Rome (Acts 28:16–31), like sub-Saharan Africa (8:27) or the Diaspora Jews at Pentecost (2:5–11), simply foreshadows proleptically the ongoing mission that extends beyond the close of Acts.⁷⁹

1:9–11: JESUS'S ASCENSION AND PROMISE TO RETURN

Given predictions fulfilled within Luke's narratives (e.g., Luke 18:33; 24:6–7, 46; Acts 1:3–8; 2:4), Luke expects us to infer that yet future predictions will also be fulfilled.⁸⁰ These include Jesus's physical return (1:11), implicitly associated with the time of the kingdom's restoration (1:6).

Jesus's "taking up" is critical for Luke, predicted in the major turning point of Luke's narrative (Luke 9:51). It forms the narrative basis for Luke's theology of Christ's exaltation (Acts 2:33–36). It also provides the imagery of his return; because Jesus will return the same way he left (Acts 1:11),⁸¹ his departure in a cloud (1:9) fits the image of his return (Luke 21:27).⁸² The other Gospels conclude their narration before an ascension, but John likely predicts it (Jn 20:17; cf. 3:13; 6:62),⁸³ and other writers assume it (e.g., Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 3:22; perhaps 1 Tim 3:16), including in parousia passages (Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 4:16).

A Closer Look: Ascension Narratives

Ascension narratives appear elsewhere in ancient literature, though most often in the mythological past or occasionally imperial propaganda.⁸⁴ What is distinctive about that of Jesus is his bodily resurrection, not his

⁷⁸ Cf. C. J. Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation," *Semeia* 47 (1989): 105–35; C. S. Keener, "The Aftermath of the Ethiopian Eunuch," *AMECR* 118 (385, 2003): 112–24.

⁷⁹ With, e.g., Tannehill, *Acts*, 18; Hengel, "Geography," 36; B. S. Rosner, "The Progress of the Word," pages 215–34 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 218, 232–33; Marguerat, *Historian*, 230.

⁸⁰ Similarly, the *Iliad* predicts Achilles's death without narrating it (e.g., *Il.* 21.110; 23.80–81; for other examples of this literary technique see Keener, *John*, 1194–95).

⁸¹ Cf. also comment on the Mount of Olives in Acts 1:12.

⁸² On parousia imagery in the ascension, see, e.g., Flender, *Theologian*, 93.

⁸³ See Keener, *John*, 1192–95.

⁸⁴ E.g., Apollodorus, *Bib.* 3.5.3; 3.11.2; Diodorus Siculus 4.38.3–5; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.500–9; Silius Italicus 5.145; Plutarch, *Numa* 11.3; Suetonius, *Aug.* 100.3–4; Apuleius, *Apol.* 22; C. H. Talbert, "The Myth of a Descending-Ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity," *NTS* 22 (4, 1976): 418–40; Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 42–47; Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 57–60. Imperial apotheosis was clearly not bodily. The common denominator of ascension stories is simply a cosmology that places the suprahuman in heaven.

relocation. Gentiles familiar with some other stories may have envisioned apotheosis,⁸⁵ making a mortal divine and immortal; Luke's larger story and emphasis on the bodily character of the resurrection (Luke 24:39) corrects that limited view,⁸⁶ though the ideas of divinity, immortality, and exaltation to heaven provide a point of contact for wider ancient audiences. Early Jewish rapture stories often developed Old Testament accounts (Elijah)⁸⁷ or possible hints (Moses;⁸⁸ Enoch),⁸⁹ sometimes transferred to other characters as well (Ezra).⁹⁰ Apart from extremely hellenized interpretations (e.g., Philo on Moses), however, these Jewish accounts did not imply deification.

As noted in the introduction, ancient authors sometimes composed parallel biographies of similar figures; they also sometimes offered succession narratives.⁹¹ Scripture itself offered examples of Joshua as Moses's successor and, most relevant here, Elisha as Elijah's successor.⁹² Moses imparted the Spirit to Joshua (Deut 34:9; cf. Acts 2:4; 6:3, 10), but the transfer of the Spirit from Elijah to Elisha is a more direct model, as part of the Old Testament's only explicit ascension scene (to which the passing on is explicitly connected; 2 Kgs 2:10, 13).⁹³ Various vocabulary in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9–11 specifically evokes that scene.⁹⁴

In Luke-Acts, Jesus occasionally and John more often (Luke 1:17) fill the role of Elijah; most significant are the passages where Jesus is like Elijah but much greater than he (cf. 4:25–27).⁹⁵

⁸⁵ Cf., e.g., Apollodorus, *Bib.* 2.7.7; 2.8.1; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.824–28, 846–51; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30; Diogenes Laertius 8.2.68; C. H. Talbert, "The Concept of Immortals in Mediterranean Antiquity," *JBL* 94 (3, 1975): 419–36.

⁸⁶ Cf. D. E. Aune, "The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels: A Critique of C. H. Talbert's *What Is a Gospel?*" 2:9–60 in *Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham; 2 vols.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 47–48.

⁸⁷ 1 Macc 2:58; Josephus, *Ant.* 9.28.

⁸⁸ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4.326; *Sipre Deut.* 357.10.5; A. W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology* (NovTSup 87; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 64–71.

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Sir 49:14; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.85; Heb 11:5; Zwiep, *Ascension*, 41–51 (and cf. 51–58).

⁹⁰ See, e.g., (later) *Greek Ezra* 5:7; Zwiep, *Ascension*, 71–74.

⁹¹ See Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 19–43.

⁹² Cf. Sir 46:1; 48:12; *T. Mos.* 1:7; 10:15; *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–53; Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 33–35, 51.

⁹³ With esp. Zwiep, *Ascension*, 194.

⁹⁴ Esp. Luke's repetition of *analambanô* ("take up") in Acts 1:2, 11; *parted/withdrew* in Luke 24:51; *carried up . . . to heaven*.

⁹⁵ Cf., e.g., T. L. Brodie, "Luke-Acts as an Imitation and Emulation of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative," pages 78–85 in Richard, *New Views*; Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 44. On the role of Elijah as eschatological prophet, see Mal 4:5–6 (MT 3:23–24); Sir 48:10; 4 *Ezra* 6:26; *m. Sotah* 9:15; *Sipre Deut.* 41.4.3; 342.5.2.

Activity	Jesus	Elijah	Elisha or others
Heals leprosy	Luke 5:12–13	–	2 Kgs 5:14; cf. Num 12:13–15
Raises the dead relatively privately	Luke 8:51	1 Kgs 17:19–23	2 Kgs 4:33
Child's life returns	Luke 8:55	1 Kgs 17:22	2 Kgs 4:35
Upper room as scene for raising	(Peter in Acts 9:37–39)	1 Kgs 17:19, 23	2 Kgs 4:10, 21, 32
Multiplies food	Luke 9:16–17	1 Kgs 17:16	2 Kgs 4:3–7, 42–44
"Greet no one"	Luke 10:4	–	2 Kgs 4:29

Still, Jesus is no mere new Elijah (Luke 9:8, 19–20, 30, 33–35). In "special" Lukan material, the disciples want to call down fire (9:54) like Elijah did (1 Kgs 18:37–38), but Jesus rebukes them (Luke 9:55). A prospective disciple wants to follow Jesus according to the rigorous standards by which Elisha followed Elijah (Luke 9:61; 1 Kgs 19:20), but Jesus demands more (Luke 9:62; cf. 1 Kgs 19:19, 21).⁹⁶ Now the one greater than Elijah passes on his mantle.

Given our different cosmology, modern readers are typically more comfortable with the theological aspect of the narrative (exaltation to another dimension) than the cosmological/spatial imagery in which it is expressed. Like some other early Christians, Luke also interprets the account in light of Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:34–35; Luke 20:42; Mark 12:36; Heb 1:3, 13; 10:12; 12:2; cf. Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Rev 3:21). ****

Angels explain Jesus's departure, just as they explained his resurrection (Luke 24:4–7):

Luke 24:4–9	Acts 1:10–12
Behold, two men in dazzling clothes (24:4)	Behold, two men in white robes (1:10)
Question: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (24:5b)	Question: "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" (1:11a)
Explanation of Jesus's absence: "He is not here, but has risen" (24:5c)	Explanation of Jesus's absence: "This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come" (1:11)
They returned (to Jerusalem; 24:9)	They returned to Jerusalem (1:12)

⁹⁶ The parallel (Q) pericope in Matthew (Matt 8:19–22) omits this anecdote.

Given the parallel, the angels may suggest that the Galileans should not be incredulous about what they have just witnessed, since Jesus already told them about his return on clouds (Luke 21:27; cf. 24:6–7).

Clouds often function as signs of divine glory in Scripture (Exod 16:10; 24:16; 40:34–35; Num 16:42; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chron 5:14; Isa 4:5; 19:1; Ezek 10:4). (Gentiles also had traditions of deities using clouds to hide or remove someone.)⁹⁷ Luke's ideal audience will undoubtedly recall two clouds from his first volume: the cloud of God's glory at Jesus's transfiguration (Luke 9:34–35), which compares Jesus favorably with Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:30–31, 35); and the cloud in which Jesus would return in glory (Luke 21:27) as the Son of Man (Dan 7:13).⁹⁸

The angels' words highlight especially the latter allusion: Jesus *will come in the same way* that he left (Acts 1:11). The parallel between his ascension and his return highlights the continuity of his bodily identity (as earlier in Luke 24:39–40), protecting against false claimants (17:22–24). His departure from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12) underlines the same point: this is where the divine Lord would come (Zech 14:4).⁹⁹

1:12–14: PRAYING TOGETHER

If 1:1–11 introduces the promise of the Spirit and provides the transition to the church's ministry, 1:12–26 involves waiting for this promise. In 1:12–14 Jesus's followers wait in prayer for the promise; in 1:15–26, they also prepare for it in faith by completing the initial, foundational team of successor-witnesses of 1:8. The Spirit may inspire anyone to prophesy (2:17–18), but only apostles close to the historical Jesus in person (1:21–22) are guarantors of the original message subsequently enshrined in Luke's Gospel. Parallels with Qumran texts suggest that Luke's account in 1:12–26 adapts genuine early Judean tradition, and Luke has no reason to invent Matthias, whom he nowhere revisits.¹⁰⁰

Luke connects the more detailed scenes in 1:9–11 and 1:15–26 with a summary of intervening events in 1:12–14. The Mount of Olives (1:12) recalls various scenes from Jesus's sojourn near Jerusalem and his passion

⁹⁷ E.g., Apollodorus, *Bib.* 2.7.7; Silius Italicus 9.484–85; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4.326; 2 *En.* 31:1–2 rec. J; for locomotion, 1 *En.* 14:8; 39:3; *T. Ab.* 9:8–10:1 A; 8:3; 10:2; 12:1 B.

⁹⁸ Cf. 4 *Ezra* 13:3.

⁹⁹ Cf. the earlier allusion to Zech 14:5 in Luke 9:26 (see also Mark 8:38; 1 Thess 3:13; Rev 19:11–14).

¹⁰⁰ See Johnson, *Acts*, 39; Barrett, *Acts*, 103; Pervo, *Acts*, 49.

(Luke 19:29, 37; 21:37; 22:39). It also reinforces the promise that Jesus would return *in the same way* that he had left (Acts 1:11; see Zech 14:3–5).¹⁰¹ The “sabbath day’s journey” evokes their continued faithfulness to the law (cf. Luke 2:22–24; 23:54–56)¹⁰² and shows their proximity to the holy city (Luke 24:49). Bethany, also mentioned by Luke as the site of the ascension (Luke 24:50), was on the eastern slope of the mountain (cf. Luke 19:29).

Casual mention of *the room upstairs* (Acts 1:13) probably suggests the previously mentioned room that hosted the last supper (Luke 22:11–12), and perhaps also a resurrection appearance (24:33–36). Whereas they once left an upstairs room to pray at the Mount of Olives (22:39–40), now they leave the mountain (Acts 1:12) and pray in an upstairs room (1:14). Upstairs rooms were small in Lower City Jerusalem, but few even in wealthy Upper City Jerusalem would hold 120 people (1:15, probably a special meeting; cf. Luke 24:53). A few, however, were unusually large.¹⁰³

Most scholars agree that Jesus did have twelve chief disciples (1 Cor 15:5).¹⁰⁴ In the NT lists, variations even in the individual names listed are slight;¹⁰⁵ *James* and *John* now intervene between *Peter* and *Andrew* because the first three had become a more intimate group (Luke 8:45, 51; 9:28). *Simon*, *James* (lit., “Jacob”), and *Judas* were among the most popular masculine names, requiring distinguishing titles (such as “Zealot” or “son of”). The names *John* and *Matthew* were common in first-century Judea; *Andrew* was rarer but is attested.¹⁰⁶ In Greek, the Aramaic “Cananaean” (Mark 3:18) is *Zealot* (Acts 1:13), meaning someone zealous (cf. 22:3), by Luke’s day sometimes violently.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Cf. Mark 13:3, though Luke omits it. Apparently some other messianic figures tried to bring God’s kingdom there (Barrett, *Acts*, 1025, citing Josephus, *War* 2.262; *Ant.* 20.169).

¹⁰² But distance estimates are sometimes only that (e.g., in Luke 22:41). The usual distance was 2,000 cubits (though only 1,000 at Qumran), so some 3,000 feet/900 meters (give or take a few hundred depending on the particular cubit); this fits the distance from Jerusalem to the mountain’s summit (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.169; *War* 5.70).

¹⁰³ See *m. Sabb.* 1:4; *t. Sabb.* 1:16; *t. Sotah* 13:3.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Q Matt 19:28//Luke 22:30; Mark 3:16; Judas’s betrayal authenticated by the criterion of embarrassment. See E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11, 98–101; J. P. Meier, “The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus’s Public Ministry?” *JBL* 116 (3, 1997): 635–72.

¹⁰⁵ Though Luke replaces Mark’s Thaddeus (Mark 3:18) with Judas [son of] James here and in Luke 6:16 (cf. independently John 14:22). Catalogues of heroes’ names were a traditional literary form.

¹⁰⁶ See M. H. Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Personal Names in Acts,” pages 79–114 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*.

¹⁰⁷ See esp. Josephus, *War* 2.651; 4.160–579; 5.3–7; 7.268–70.

Luke frequently reports women's as well as men's responses to Jesus (e.g., Luke 8:2; Acts 5:14; 8:3, 12; 9:2; 17:4, 12; 22:4).¹⁰⁸ *Mary* was by far the most common feminine name in Judea in this period, so Luke identifies her specifically also as Jesus's *mother*. Her presence evokes the early scenes of Luke's Gospel. Because the Holy Spirit overshadowed her in Luke 1:35, her reception of the Spirit may function paradigmatically for Acts 2; Luke employs the term *doulê* (female servant) only in Acts 2:18 and for Mary (Luke 1:38, 48). The other *women* probably include the women of Luke 8:2–3; 23:49, 55; 24:5, 10.¹⁰⁹

Jesus's *brothers* naturally appear after his mother; Luke seems to take for granted his audience's knowledge of them (cf. 1 Cor 9:5), not even needing to specify that his James in Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18 is one of them (Gal 1:19; cf. 1 Cor 15:7). Although various views circulated in the early church, the majority of scholars today contend that Jesus's brothers are subsequent sons of Mary and Joseph, although foster brothers cannot be ruled out.¹¹⁰ Jesus prioritized discipleship ties over kinship (cf. Luke 8:19–21; 14:12, 26; 18:29; 21:16), but kin here appear along with his apostles.

Prayer is a frequent theme in Luke-Acts,¹¹¹ and it often precedes the coming of the Spirit, as here (Acts 4:31; 8:15; 13:2).¹¹² Only Luke among the Gospels mentions Jesus praying when the Spirit descends on him (Luke 3:21–22), and Luke focuses the Father's promise to answer prayer with "good gifts" (Matt 7:11) on the specific gift of the Holy Spirit

¹⁰⁸ Although the matter is debated, I have argued that Luke's treatment of women is among the more progressive and favorable approaches of his era; see Keener, *Acts*, 1:597–638.

¹⁰⁹ Against the antifeminist Codex D, which identifies the women as the apostles' wives.

¹¹⁰ See esp. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (6 vols.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994–), 1:318–32; cf. Matt 1:19; Luke 2:7, 23.

¹¹¹ See 2:42; 3:1; 4:24; 6:4, 6; 7:59–60; 8:15; 9:11, 40; 10:2, 4, 9, 30–31; 12:5; 13:3; 14:23; 16:13, 16, 25; 20:36; 22:17; 27:29; 28:8; comment in, e.g., Bovon, *Theologian*, 400–3; A. A. Trites, "The Prayer Motif in Luke-Acts," pages 168–86 in Talbert, *Perspectives*; R. J. Karris, *What Are They Saying about Luke and Acts? A Theology of the Faithful God* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 74–83; S. F. Plymale, *The Prayer Texts of Luke-Acts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); D. Crump, *Jesus the Intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts* (WUNT 2.49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); K. S. Han, "Theology of Prayer in the Gospel of Luke," *JETS* 43 (4, 2000): 675–93; F. P. Viljoen, "Jesus as Intercessor in Luke-Acts," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 19 (2008): 329–49; G. R. Osborne, "Moving Forward on Our Knees: Corporate Prayer in the New Testament," *JETS* 53 (2, June 2010): 243–67, here 253–57 (on Acts); Lane, *Gentile Mission*, 64–67.

¹¹² Cf. also 9:17; 10:2–4, 9, 30–31; 19:6; Hull, *Spirit*, 48; E. Richard, "Pentecost as a Recurrent Theme in Luke-Acts," pages 133–49 in Richard, *New Views*, 135; J. Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 211; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 270.

(Luke 11:13).¹¹³ The NRSV wrongly omits the term “with one mind” (*homo-thumadon*), a motif in Acts (2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25) that frames their preparation for the coming of the Spirit (*together* in 2:1).¹¹⁴ Like prayer, unity is important for corporate experiences of the Spirit.

1:15–26: RESTORING THE LEADERSHIP

Appointing leaders for the movement’s future, despite its modest numbers so far, indicates confidence in Jesus’s promise. These leaders also function as witnesses (1:8) who can share their personal experiences of Jesus (cf. 1:21–22).¹¹⁵ Jesus presumably chose twelve apostles originally to foreshadow Israel’s restoration (Luke 22:30//Matt 19:28; cf. Acts 26:7), probably in a manner analogous to the twelve special leaders in Qumran texts.¹¹⁶

Gathering and Judas’s Fate

No auditor of Luke’s first volume will be surprised by Peter’s leadership here (Luke 4:38–39; 5:4–10; 6:14; 8:45, 51; 9:20, 28, 32–33; 12:41; 18:28; 22:8, 31–34, 54–62; 24:12, 34).¹¹⁷ That *Peter stood up* also reflects the normal ancient posture in addressing assemblies (other than rabbis teaching; cf. Acts 5:34; 11:28; 13:16; 15:5, 7; 17:22; 23:9; 25:18; 27:21).

The roughly *one hundred twenty* (1:15), ten times the full number of apostles,¹¹⁸ might include some of the seventy(-two) of Luke 10:1, 17. Jesus showed himself to more than five hundred of his followers

¹¹³ Prayer for the Spirit fulfills prayer for the kingdom (Luke 11:2); the Spirit empowers the mission (Acts 1:8) that precedes the kingdom’s consummation (1:6–7).

¹¹⁴ Paul likewise emphasizes unity (Rom 12:4–6; 1 Cor 1:10; 12:12–13; Eph 4:3–4, 13; Phil 1:27; 2:1–5; Col 3:14), a major topic in ancient moral discourse (see, e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.17–19; 38; 40.35–38; further M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991]).

¹¹⁵ Eyewitness testimony was crucial for a historian such as Luke, but seems to have been a hallmark of early Christianity more generally (1 Cor 15:5–8, 15; cf. John 15:27; 1 John 1:2; 4:14).

¹¹⁶ 1QS 8.1; cf. 1QM 2.1–2; 5.2; 11Q19 57.11–13; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98–104. Cf. princes of the tribes (Num 2:3–29; 7:11, 18–78; 17:6; 11Q19 57.11–12).

¹¹⁷ This fits our other sources; see Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; Gal 1:18; esp. 1 Cor 9:5; 15:5; Gal 2:9; Schnabel, *Mission*, 395–98.

¹¹⁸ Qumran sectarians apparently required at least one priest per ten members (1QS 6.3–4; CD 13.1–2); some later rabbis used 120 as a rough figure for the minimum number of males in a community to warrant its own judicial assembly (*m. Sanh.* 1:6).

(1 Cor 15:6), but most had probably by now returned to their homes and livelihoods in Galilee.¹¹⁹

Like Jesus in the Gospel (Luke 4:21; 22:37; 24:44), Peter explains key events in light of Scripture (Acts 1:16–20). Attributing Judas's apostasy to God's plan (cf. comment on 2:23) reverses the shame of this event.¹²⁰

His mention of Judas as *a guide for those who arrested Jesus* recalls the fuller account of this betrayal in Luke 22:3–6, 21–22, 47–48. Betrayal of trust was considered one of the most heinous offenses in antiquity.¹²¹ Peter describes the great honor that Judas abandoned, a *share* in apostolic *ministry*. The term for *share* (*klêros*) referred to a "portion" or "lot." Just as God "allotted" to Levites their specific duties (see LXX 1 Chron 24:5, 7, 31; 25:8–9; 26:13–14), he also assigned particular roles to Jesus's various disciples.¹²² Judas abandoned his "portion" (1:17); thus the next apostle would need to be chosen by "lot" (1:26). The term for *ministry* here (*diakonia*) elsewhere applies to service (Luke 4:39; 10:40; 12:37; 17:8), a role modeled by Jesus (22:26–27) and carried on in Acts (Acts 6:1, 4; 11:29; 12:25; 20:24; 21:19).

Luke adds an explanatory aside in 1:18–19 to inform the reader what happened to Judas after his betrayal in Luke 22:47–48 (cf. 22:22).¹²³ (Digressions were common in ancient biography¹²⁴ and historiography.)¹²⁵ Judas *acquired a field* with blood money (1:18), in contrast to Levites

¹¹⁹ Although many teachers had fewer, popular teachers could easily have a hundred students (see, e.g., Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.11.591) and hundreds of adherents or listeners (Iamblichus, *V.P.* 6.29–30; 36.267).

¹²⁰ Even a disciple turning out badly could shame the teacher (e.g., Alcibiades the pupil of Socrates). That betrayal could shame the person so betrayed leads most scholars to conclude that one of Jesus's disciples did historically betray him.

¹²¹ See, e.g., Lysias, *Or.* 6.23, §105; 8.5–6, §112; Cicero, *Rosc. Amer.* 40.116; Nepos 14 (Datames), 6.3; 11.5.

¹²² Cf. also the lot specifying which tenth would resettle Jerusalem (Neh 11:1), perhaps like a tenth of the 120 being apostles here.

¹²³ For asides in Acts, see S. M. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 72; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 119–35; in ancient historiography, 56–78; in biography, e.g., T. P. Hillman, "Authorial Statements, Narrative, and Character in Plutarch's *Agessilaus-Pompeius*," *GRBS* 35 (3, 1994): 255–80.

¹²⁴ See, e.g., Nepos 16 (Pelopidas), 3.1; Josephus, *Life* 336–367; Plutarch, *Alex.* 35.8; *Lysander* 1.2; *Pompey* 4.4.

¹²⁵ E.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 7.4.1; Thucydides 1.24.1ff; Polybius 3.2.7; 3.9.6; 3.39.1; 3.59.9; 31.30.4; 6.1.2; 6.50.1; Sallust, *Cat.* 5.9–13.5; Justin, *Epit.* 3.7.16–4.1.18; 17.3.1–22; 18.3.1–18.4.1; 41.1.1–41.3.10; 42.2.7–42.3.9; Livy 9.17.1–9.19.17; Valerius Maximus 4.8.1 (with 4.7. ext. 2b); Velleius Paterculus 1.14.1; 2.38.1–2.40.1; esp. 2.59.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.224–251; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2; Arrian, *Ind.* 6.1.

whose “lot” (cf. 1:17) was to be their ministry rather than land (Deut 10:9; 18:1–2);¹²⁶ thus his land became desolate (Acts 1:20).

Disembowelment or bowel pains provide a graphic image for a terrible death (e.g., 2 Sam 2:23; 3:27; 20:10, 12),¹²⁷ often considered especially appropriate for the wicked.¹²⁸ Judas’s death, like that of Herod (Acts 12:23) and Ananias (5:5), warns Luke’s audience of the dangers of opposing the kingdom. Jewish tradition deemed apostasy a particularly heinous crime.¹²⁹ Judas’s failure to persevere thus also sounds a warning to other would-be disciples (Luke 8:12–13; 9:62; Acts 8:20–24; 14:22; 20:26–30), although restoration remains open to the repentant (Luke 22:32; Acts 8:22–24).¹³⁰

That the field is “of blood” (1:19) reinforces the goriness of Judas’s end (1:18) and draws attention to his bloodguilt (cf. Luke 11:50–51; Acts 5:28). That Judas fell *headlong* (Acts 1:18) may evoke the fate of the wicked in Wis 4:19. The multiple ancient stories of Judas’s death all reinforce the core that it was horrible.¹³¹ Although hanging was a common means of suicide,¹³² it also was now perceived as a shameful death, as in Matt 27:5.¹³³ Matthew’s hanging could fit Luke’s (then posthumous) spattering if the rope eventually broke or was cut (Judeans did not leave corpses hanging);¹³⁴ neither Evangelist,

¹²⁶ Contrast faithful disciples (Luke 12:13–48; Acts 3:6; 20:33–35). Money could not purchase a “lot” in God’s calling (Acts 8:21).

¹²⁷ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 4.525–26; 20.418–20; 21.180–81; *b. Hul.* 56b–57a.

¹²⁸ E.g., Judg 3:21–22; 2 Chron 21:18–19; 2 Macc 9:5; Josephus, *War* 1.81, 84; 5.385; 7.453; *Ant.* 9.101–3; 19.346–50. Historians often viewed evil characters’ subsequent sufferings as just retribution; see, e.g., Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.1.15–16; esp. Allen, *Death of Herod*, 155–95. Jewish tradition emphasized punishment often fitting the crime: e.g., Prov 26:27; Sir 27:25–27; 2 Macc 4:38; 9:5–6; 13:7–8; *Jub.* 4:32; *LAB* 44:9–10; 1QpHab 11.5, 7, 15; 12.5–6; 4Q181 fi.1–2.

¹²⁹ E.g., 1 Macc 2:15; *Ps. Sol.* 17:15; 4 Macc 9:24. It merited divine (e.g., Ezek 33:12–13, 18; 1 *En.* 91:7; *Jub.* 15:34) and, when possible, human punishment (e.g., 1QS 7.22–23; 3 Macc 7:14–15; *t. Demai* 2:9).

¹³⁰ Cf. James 5:19–20; S. Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1969); B. J. Oropeza, *In the Footsteps of Judas and Other Defectors: The Gospels, Acts, and Johannine Letters* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

¹³¹ The lavish description in Papias 18.4–7 is surely secondary, though Papias probably also knew Luke’s version (cf. 3.10); some harmonized the versions (18.1–3).

¹³² E.g., Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 1237–66; Euripides, *Hel.* 136, 200–2; *Hipp.* 776–81, 802; frg. 1111; Apollonius Rhodius 1.1063–65; Polybius 33.5.2; Cicero, *Scaur.* 6.10–11; Ovid, *Her.* 3.38; Pliny, *Nat.* 16.45.108.

¹³³ E.g., 2 Sam 17:23; Livy 42.28.11–12; Plutarch, *Themist.* 22.2.

¹³⁴ Divergent traditions sometimes both reflect information. Thus, e.g., photographs confirmed apparently contradictory reports about persons hanged in two different locations in 1881, one of the hangings evidently posthumous (P. R. Eddy and G. A. Boyd, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007], 424).

however, shows cognizance of the other's details, and they differ regarding who used the money to pay for the field.¹³⁵ Matthew's and Luke's independent accounts do confirm some information on which both drew.¹³⁶

Matt 27:5–8	Acts 1:18–19
Judas as the betrayer	Judas as the betrayer
Judas's wages were used (by others) to buy a field (27:6–7)	Judas acquired a field as the "wage" of his injustice (1:18)
Judas died in an awful manner (27:5)	Judas died in an awful manner (1:18)
(Apparently the story remained widespread; 27:8)	Judas's sorry end became widely known (1:19)
This occasion prompted naming the field, "Field of Blood" (27:8)	This occasion prompted naming the field, "Field of Blood" (1:19)
The land became an impure burial plot (27:7)	The land became desolate, no longer suited for habitation (1:20)

That word spread widely (Acts 1:19) offered warning to those who heard (cf. 5:11).¹³⁷

It is written (1:20) was a standard formula for citing Scripture.¹³⁸ Luke often looks for general patterns and principles in Scripture (as in Acts 7). Early Christians applied psalms believed to be Davidic to the Davidic king par excellence (cf. Acts 2:30, 34); depictions of the psalmist's enemies thus become appropriate for the enemies of the Messiah and his people (cf. Acts 4:25–27). If the psalmist was a righteous sufferer, this role would apply to Jesus par excellence.¹³⁹ If the two verses Peter quotes (Ps 69:25 [LXX 68:26]; 109 [LXX 108]:8) applied to oppressors of the righteous generally, then "how much more"¹⁴⁰ ought they to apply to Judas, betrayer of "the righteous one" (Acts 3:14; 7:52).

¹³⁵ Historians such as Luke could condense details, but how would Matthew know what transpired between Judas and the chief priests unless some of it became public knowledge? Some find midrashic elements in Matt 27:3–7.

¹³⁶ Cf. P. Benoit, *Jesus and the Gospel* (2 vols.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973–74), 1:189–207, esp. 206–7.

¹³⁷ Word spread rapidly in urban environments (Stambaugh, *City*, 139–40; see Acts 19:10).

¹³⁸ E.g., Josh 8:31; Ezra 3:2, 4; 6:18; Neh 8:15; 10:34, 36; CD 1.13; 5.1; 7.10; 11.18, 20; 1QS 5.15, 17; 8.14; *T. Zeb.* 3.4; *m. Git.* 9.10.

¹³⁹ Christians elsewhere applied psalms of righteous sufferers, esp. Ps 69, to Jesus, e.g., Ps 41:9 in John 13:18; Ps 69:9 in John 2:17 and Rom 15:3; Ps 69:21 in Matt 27:34; and Ps 69:22 in Rom 11:9.

¹⁴⁰ A standard Jewish argument (*qal vaomer*), e.g., *t. Ber.* 4:16–17; 6:19; *Sabb.* 15:16; *Mek. Pisha* 1.38; 2.36–37; 7.48; 7.61; 9.45; *Sipra Vayyiqra Diburā Denedabah* par. 2.3.4.3; par. 3.5.3.2.

Like most residents of Lower Galilee, Peter would have been bilingual (cf. 10:28–43), and he may address the gathering here in Greek. Jewish interpreters often connected verses based on shared wording,¹⁴¹ although Luke omits the relevant part of the second verse, the two verses quoted begin in Greek with forms of the same term.

Whereas his *homestead* would remain *desolate*, the *position of overseer* that Judas abandoned was now available to another (1:20).¹⁴²

A New Apostle (1:21–26)

Based on his exposition of Scripture (1:20), Peter now lists the qualifications for Judas's replacement among the twelve foundational witnesses. In response, the community provides the best qualified candidates, and the lot decides which of the two is God's choice.

Lists of qualifications (1:21–22) were common in antiquity (see comment on Acts 6:3). Although at least one early apostle (in the broader Pauline sense) was a woman (Rom 16:7), Peter here specifies (or perhaps assumes) *men*, perhaps given the preference for male testimony in the wider culture.¹⁴³ *Accompanied* presumably specifies those who participated in Jesus's journeys, including Luke's long travel narrative (Luke 9:51–19:44) and Jesus's final journey (23:49, 55). They must be witnesses from the *beginning* (Acts 1:22), which for the gospel story went back to Jesus's introduction by John the Baptist (10:37; 13:24; cf. Mark 1:1–4).¹⁴⁴

The candidates (Acts 1:23) may have belonged to those whom Jesus earlier sent out in Luke 10:1. *Joseph* was a very common Jewish name; the epithet *Barsabbas*, meaning that he was born on the sabbath, distinguishes him from others. *Justus* was a nickname meaning "the just"; it appears elsewhere both as a name and a nickname (e.g., Acts 18:7; Col 4:11).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ The principle of *gezerah shavah*; e.g., *Mek. Pisha* 5.103; *Nezikin* 10.15–16, 26, 38; 17.17.

¹⁴² Luke uses a cognate of this term for the continuing ministry of other overseers in Acts 20:28; cf. Phil 1:1.

¹⁴³ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 4.219; *Sipra Vayyiqra Dibura Dehobah* pq.7.45.1.1; Justin, *Inst.* 2.10.6.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. John 1:19–36; 15:27; for the Baptist, cf. also Josephus, *Ant.* 18.116–19. Luke's eyewitness sources (Luke 1:2) allowed him to report from an earlier "beginning" (1:3). Thorough historians liked to address their topics "from the beginning" (Diodorus Siculus 4.8.5).

¹⁴⁵ Nepos, *Generals* 3 (Aristides), 1.2; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.4–7; M.H. Williams, "Names," 104. For a later tradition about Joseph Barsabbas, see Papias frg. 3.9.

Most people in antiquity, and especially Jews, affirmed God's knowledge of hearts (Acts 1:24; Ps 7:9; Jer 17:10).¹⁴⁶ The Lord "choosing" Matthias (Acts 1:24) provides continuity with his "choosing" other apostles in 1:2 (cf. Luke 6:13). Whereas Judas forfeited his *ministry* for a physical place (Acts 1:17–18) and thus went to *his own place* (Gr. *topos*, 1:25),¹⁴⁷ his replacement takes a *place [topos] in this ministry* (1:25). Just as God was directly active in choosing Zechariah by lot in the opening scene of Luke's first volume (Luke 1:9), so here he selects another figure by lot, Matthias.¹⁴⁸

The term for *lots* in Acts 1:26 is the same Greek term (*klêros*) for "share" in 1:17. Judas squandered what God apportioned to him, so now God apportions it to another. Greeks and Romans alike had long cast lots to choose people for various public offices, to determine, for example, where Roman governors would be sent,¹⁴⁹ or which sphere of office each praetor would take.¹⁵⁰ Ancient Israel also used lots to choose workers for special duties.¹⁵¹ Casting lots normally involved placing names or letters (on small stones or pottery fragments) into an urn or other container, then either letting one fall out or having rivals blindly pick one.¹⁵²

Sometimes minor characters allow bridges through which an implied audience can better identify with the story.¹⁵³ Thus the opportunity for a disciple unnamed in the Gospel (and perhaps unknown to Luke's ideal audience) to serve may invite Luke's audience to participate in the story.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Ps. Sol. 9:3; 14:8; 17:25; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.52; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.166, 181; *Ant.* 4.41; Rev 2:23.

¹⁴⁷ For Judas, perhaps death (Eccl 3:20; 6:6), but perhaps the "place of torment" (Luke 16:28). "His own [*idion*] place" contrasts with the disciples who left their "own" (*idia*) property to follow Jesus (Luke 18:28; cf. Acts 4:32), and possibly with the new community the apostles received in return (Acts 4:23; 24:23; cf. Luke 18:29–30).

¹⁴⁸ Cf. also Bede, *Comm. Acts* 1.26. Despite detractors (e.g., Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.9), most people in antiquity did believe that lots could reveal the divine will (e.g., Xenophon, *Cyr.* 6.3.36; 7.1.15).

¹⁴⁹ Cicero, *Quint. frat.* 1.1.9.27; Velleius Paterculus 2.59.2; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.12.2; 4.9.2; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.3.

¹⁵⁰ Cicero, *Verr.* 1.8.21. For many other examples, see Keener, *Acts*, 1:776–79.

¹⁵¹ E.g., 1 Chron 24:5, 31; 25:8; 26:13–14; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.62; 7.367; Luke 1:9.

¹⁵² For one form, see Lucian, *Hermot.* 40.

¹⁵³ See E. S. Malbon, "The Major Importance of the Minor Characters in Mark," pages 58–86 in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (ed. E. V. McKnight and E. S. Malbon; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

2:1–4: SIGNS OF PENTECOST

This narrative is pivotal for Luke. The gift of the Spirit is the promise with which the Gospel closes (Luke 24:47–49) and Acts opens (Acts 1:4–8), and the final element of the Gospel’s conclusion (Luke 24:53) is continued in the final element of the Pentecost narrative proper (Acts 2:46–47). Jesus’s and Peter’s / the church’s public ministry opens with texts explaining their empowerment and mission (Luke 4:18–19; Acts 2:17–18).

The empowerment to speak God’s message to the ends of the earth (1:4–8; Luke 24:47, 49) begins to be fulfilled here. Luke highlights the movement’s cross-cultural empowerment (Acts 1:8) by the Spirit-empowered disciples speaking other languages and by the message going to Jewish hearers from many nations, foreshadowing the global mission (2:5–13). The Spirit inspires proclamation (2:14–40), producing a community that can live out the ideals of the kingdom (2:41–47). I address the multicultural dimension further at 2:4 and especially 2:5–13, and the prophetic dimension especially at 2:17–18; for the temporal relationship to conversion, see comment at 1:4–5; 2:38–39; 8:14–17.

Signs of the Spirit’s coming include foretastes of eschatological promises (wind, 2:2; fire, 2:3; the Spirit; “the last days,” 2:17; cf. 1:6–11). This promised eschatological empowerment follows Jesus’s exaltation, thus attesting that Jesus is the risen one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16), Israel’s rightful Lord (Acts 2:33–36).

Ancient historians included lessons in their accounts. Because this evidence of Jesus’s exaltation continues for all who turn to Christ (2:38), including abroad and in the future (2:39), Luke surely wants his own audience to depend on the same empowerment of the Spirit for effective witness. A “last-days” empowerment (2:17) and salvation (2:21) cannot be relegated to the past. Thus he establishes a narrative pattern, in which characters seek the Spirit’s ministry in prayer and faith (1:14; 4:31; cf. 8:15; 9:11–12, 17; 10:4; 13:2–4; Luke 11:13), and/or receive this experience through the ministry of its agents (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6). Despite Luke’s more biographic focus on key figures (1:2, 8, 24; 10:41; later cf. 9:15), Pentecost theologically democratizes the mission for all believers (2:17–18, 39; cf., e.g., 8:4; 11:19–20; Num 11:29; Joel 2:28–29).

Believers here follow the model established by Jesus in Luke’s first volume:¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 128–29; Goulder, *Type*, 61.

Luke 3–4	Acts 2
John promises that the coming one will baptize in the Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16)	Jesus does baptize in the Spirit (Acts 1:4–5; 2:4, 16–18, 38–39); tongues of fire (2:3)
The Spirit comes at Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:21–22)	The Spirit comes; promised to believers at their baptism (Acts 2:38)
Jesus's mission programme from Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:18–19)	The church's mission programme from Joel 2 (Acts 2:17–21)

In 2:1 the believers remain together, presumably in united prayer, continuing the thought of 1:14. That is, the preparation for Pentecost (1:12–2:1) is complete. The “all” presumably includes more than the Twelve (1:13, 26), though these are the leaders (2:14, 37), since more than twelve languages are spoken (2:5–11). It includes at least the women and Jesus's brothers (1:14), though all are Galileans (2:7). Luke's condensing of material leaves ambiguous where they gathered: believers frequently met in the temple (Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46; 5:12), but also “from house to house (Acts 2:46). The preceding context could favor the upper room (1:13), but at some point they must have entered the temple, Jerusalem's main public space, which could hold seventy-five thousand people.

Pentecost (2:1) was a covenant renewal festival,¹⁵⁵ eventually connected in Jewish tradition (though possibly after Luke's time) with the giving of the law at Sinai. Luke himself does not highlight these features,¹⁵⁶ but some such associations apparently persist from his sources, supporting authentic Judean tradition here.¹⁵⁷ (Only Luke, the historian, specifies the beginning of the church's Spirit experience, though others continue to elaborate the experience.)¹⁵⁸ Luke's own interest in Pentecost is its timing

¹⁵⁵ *Jub.* 6:17, 32–38.

¹⁵⁶ He omits even obvious potential Pentecost allusions such as “firstfruits” (which he could have applied to the initial converts; cf. Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15).

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g., B. Noack, “The Day of Pentecost in Jubilees, Qumran, and Acts,” *ASTI* 1 (1962): 73–95 (89–91); Wenk, *Power*, 246–51; N. P. Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders: The Apostles in the Ritual of Status Transformation in Acts 1–2* (JSNTSup 255; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 192–200. Cf. also Philo, *Decal.* 33–47.

¹⁵⁸ Others presuppose that at some point Spirit experience became dramatically greater and more pervasive than in ancient Israel (Rom 7:6; 8:2–4; 14:17; 2 Cor 3:3–18; Gal 3:2–5, 14; 1 Pet 1:11–12; Heb 2:4; 6:4; 1 John 3:24) and do speak of God “pouring” the Spirit (Rom 5:5; Tit 3:5–6) and “firstfruits” regarding the Spirit (Rom 8:23). Given the universality of Spirit-experience in the churches, it presumably began at Jerusalem, the founding center (Rom 15:19); comparable movements often begin in ecstasy (see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and*

soon (fifty days) after Passover, and especially its role as the next pilgrimage festival: Diaspora Jews now swelled Jerusalem's population (2:5-11).¹⁵⁹

Acts 1:4-8 and "last days" in 2:17 show the Spirit as a foretaste of the future: some of the end-time promise is being fulfilled in the present (cf. also Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). The kingdom is not yet consummated (Luke 19:27; 20:43; Acts 2:35) but some eschatology is realized.

Wind (2:2) and *fire* (2:3) resemble biblical theophanies,¹⁶⁰ including at the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, but they also reflect images of end-time restoration (Ezek 37:5-10;¹⁶¹ cf. John 20:22) and judgment (Luke 3:9, 16-17; 12:49-50; cf. 17:29).¹⁶² Most important because repeated on other occasions in Acts (Acts 10:46; 19:6), speaking *other languages* by the Spirit (2:4) reflects end-time prophetic empowerment (2:17-18). The new, messianic era is also "the age of the Spirit."¹⁶³

God sometimes produces external, often heavenly, signs of his Spirit's coming (2:2-4; 4:31; Luke 3:21-22). The sound of *violent wind* filling *the entire house* (2:2) looks beyond the immediate venue to biblical

the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament [London: SCM, 1975], 135-56). The church's association of the gift of the Spirit with believers' conversion (e.g., Rom 8:9; Gal 3:3) and apparently Christ's exaltation (Rom 8:11; 1 Pet 3:18) also suggest an initial date shortly after Jesus's resurrection (by itself, this could be *earlier* than Pentecost rather than later, as Luke knows, Acts 2:33, 38; yet he separates them temporally anyway). The narrative of John's Gospel ends before Pentecost and so provides a foretaste in John 20:19-23; see discussions in G. M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 123-31, 148; Keener, *John*, 1196-1200; cf. Augustine, *Tract. In* 74.2.2-3; Chrysostom, *Hom.* 86; Origen, *Cels.* 7.51.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Josephus, *War* 5.199. Festal crowds were ideal places to seek mass attention; see, e.g., Lucian, *Peregr.* 1, 19; Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.2; *m. Sanh.* 11:4. Perhaps a few tourists would come as well; cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 5.15.70; *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Hornblower et al.³ 1535.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Exod 3:2; Deut 4:24; 2 Sam 5:24; Job 38:1; Ps 29:3-10; 97:2-5; 104:3; Isa 29:6; 30:27-28; 66:15; Ezek 1:4; for Sinai, Exod 19:16-20; Deut 4:11-15; Heb 12:18; in the future, Isa 66:15; fire and wind also appear at the ascension in 2 Kgs 2:11. Gentiles also could associate storms with the divine presence (van der Horst, "Parallels to Acts," 49-50).

¹⁶¹ See J. A. Grassi, "Ezekiel xxxvii.1-14 and the New Testament," *NTS* 11 (2, 1965): 162-64 (164).

¹⁶² Cf. Menzies, *Development*, 137-44; B. Charette, "'Tongues as of Fire': Judgment as a Function of Glossolalia in Luke's Thought," *JPT* 13 (2, 2005): 173-86.

¹⁶³ With, e.g., W. Barclay, "Acts ii.14-40," *ExpT* 70 (7, 1959): 196-99; G. E. Ladd, *The Young Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 34-52; C. F. Sleeper, "Pentecost and Resurrection," *JBL* 84 (4, 1965): 389-99 (390). For Jewish views of the two ages, see, e.g., 1QS 4.16-17; 1 En. 71:15; 4 Ezra 6:9; 7:50, 113; 8:1-2; 2 Bar. 15:8; *m. Abot* 4:17; *t. Ber.* 6:21; *Sipre Deut.* 31.4.1; 34.4.3; 48.7.1.

theophanies filling God's house (cf. Isa 6:4; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; cf. Exod 40:34–35); but whereas wind fills the house, the disciples are *filled with the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:4).¹⁶⁴ *Tongues of fire* (2:3) is a Jewish idiom for flames (Isa 5:24),¹⁶⁵ yet points more importantly to the empowerment of their tongues in Acts 2:4.

Luke's ideal audience was biblically literate and would understand being *filled with* God's Spirit (2:4; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Deut 34:9; Sir 39:6), including for inspired speech (Mic 3:8; Luke 1:15, 41, 67),¹⁶⁶ as most subsequent occasions will also reveal (Acts 4:8, 31; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9; cf. Eph 5:18–20). Individuals could experience multiple fillings (Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9), though Luke might restrict the term "baptize" only to their initial experience (1:5; 11:16). Most of Luke's major characters at some point are "filled with" or "full of" the Spirit (e.g., Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 4:8; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9), thus facing the hardships of prophets (Luke 6:22–23; 11:47–51; Acts 7:51–52). "Full of the Spirit" may describe those who are already or regularly equipped by the Spirit for their tasks (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; 11:24).

More than the other signs (2:2–3), Luke highlights worship in unlearned languages (2:4). It provides the transition for Peter's message (2:5–16), and Luke even repeats its mention on two other occasions of Spirit-reception (10:45–46; 19:6). Worship in tongues is central for Luke's narrative because it fulfills the promise of eschatological Spirit-inspired speech (2:17–18) and (on his narrative level) signifies empowerment for cross-cultural witness (1:8).¹⁶⁷ Scripture already recognized corporate prophetic speech (1 Sam 10:5; 19:20–24) and Spirit-filled, prophetically inspired worship (e.g., 1 Sam 10:5; 1 Chron 25:1, 3).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Much greater; cf. 1 Kgs 19:11–13. *Wind* and God's *Spirit* are connected etymologically and in Ezek 37:9–10; John 3:8; the term for *wind* Luke uses probably evokes the breath of life (LXX Gen 2:7; 7:22; Isa 42:5; Wis 2:2; cf. John 20:22). *Suddenly* (Acts 2:2) is appropriate for calamities (16:26) but also storms (cf. Prov 1:27 LXX).

¹⁶⁵ Also 1 En. 14:9–10, 15; 71:5; 1Q29 fl.3; f2.3; 4Q376 fl.2.1; 11Q10 36.5.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Elisha with Elijah's Spirit in Sir 48:12; Jesus being full of the Spirit in Luke 4:1.

¹⁶⁷ See C. S. Keener, "Why Does Luke Use Tongues as a Sign of the Spirit's Empowerment?" *JPT* 15 (2, 2007): 177–84 (177–78, 180–81); idem, "The Holy Spirit," pages 158–73 in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (ed. G. R. McDermott; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 171; cf. D. J. McCollough, *Ritual Water, Ritual Spirit: An Analysis of the Timing, Mechanism, and Manifestation of Spirit-Reception in Luke-Acts* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2017).

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Sib. Or.* 3:489–91; *LAB* 32:14. In the priestly perspective of the Chronicler, national revivals normally involved revivals of cultic worship (1 Chron 6:31–32; 15:16, 28–29;

A Closer Look: Tongues

Scholars approach tongues in various ways.¹⁶⁹ Although priests could “interpret” mantic Greek utterances into more eloquent Greek, most proposed ancient gentile parallels to tongues are at best limited.¹⁷⁰ Some compare the tradition that God provided the fiery revelation at Sinai in the hearers’ languages,¹⁷¹ or Jewish traditions about speaking in angelic languages,¹⁷² but the clearest examples are much later than Luke. Ecstatic enthusiasm was widespread, including as “prophetic” possession trance,¹⁷³ but the relevance of this to tongues depends on which examples one takes for tongues and how widely one defines “ecstatic.”¹⁷⁴ Ecstatic sorts of experiences often do surface in times of revivalistic intensity.¹⁷⁵

Some traditional societies today occasionally report something like glossolalia with trances. Modern anthropological studies of (usually) Christian glossolalia in various cultures have found patterns of altered states of consciousness with observable neurological effects, although the groups and ecstatic experiences studied differ from experiences of some, possibly the majority, of other charismatic Christians.

16:4–6, 41–42; 23:30; 2 Chron 8:14; 20:18–22, 28; 29:25; 30:27; 31:2; 35:2–5; Ezra 3:10–11; Neh 12:24, 27–47).

¹⁶⁹ I merely survey discussion here. Already in 1985, W. E. Mills, *Glossolalia: A Bibliography* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1985), included over 1,150 entries.

¹⁷⁰ See D. E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 23 (1980):1:1507–57 (1549–51); idem, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 31; C. Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment* (WUNT 2.75; Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 103–65.

¹⁷¹ Philo, *Decal.* 46; cf. *b. Sabb.* 88b.

¹⁷² *T. Job* 48–51; 52:7/3 (but note intelligibility in 51:4); cf. *Apoc. Zeph.* 8:3–4; 1 Cor 13:1. Cf. perhaps languages of angels, or angels as princes of nations with languages, in 4Q403 fr.1.1–6; cf. perhaps 3 *En.* 29:1; 54:3.

¹⁷³ E.g., Ovid, *Metam.* 2.640; Virgil, *Aen.* 6.77–102; Lucan, *Civil War* 5.97–101; 1 Sam 19:24; *Sib. Or.* 11.316–24; Philo, *Plant.* 39; *Migr.* 35, 190; *Heir* 68–69, 264–65; *QG* 9; Josephus, *War* 3.353; *Ant.* 6.56, 76; 8.346; *LAB* 28:6, 10; 4 *Bar.* 5:8.

¹⁷⁴ M. Turner, “Early Christian Experience and Theology of ‘Tongues’ – A New Testament Perspective,” pages 1–33 in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives* (ed. M. J. Cartledge; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 31–32. Paul differentiates tongues from a cognitive process (1 Cor 14:2, 14), but 1 Cor 14:32 seems to rule out full possession trance.

¹⁷⁵ Cf., e.g., Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching*, 58; Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 192; J. Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers, and Finney* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 57–59.

Some suggest a coded language broken arbitrarily with vowels or affectively but not linguistically intelligible speech. Some analyses view the samples as less complex than full language yet more phonologically structured than pure free vocalization, perhaps a nonpropositional communication by the speaker heavily dependent on formulaic implicatures.¹⁷⁶ (Contemporary studies have overturned earlier associations of glossolalia with pathology, reflecting both newer empirical studies and a shift in perspective.)¹⁷⁷ Paul and Luke undoubtedly viewed it as a linguistic phenomenon (thus their term *glôssai*, “languages”), but in most cases Paul expected it to be spiritually interpreted (cf. 1 Cor 2:13; 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13–19, 26–28), so that the focus was affective communication with God rather than a language to be analyzed.

Luke’s omitting mention of it on some strategic occasions (Acts 4:31; 8:17–18; 9:17; 13:52), despite its usefulness to his emphasis in 1:8, may suggest that he mentions it only where he has a specific tradition that it occurred, including here. (Paul was undoubtedly not the first Christian to pray in tongues; 1 Cor 14:18.)

Luke apparently belonged to the Pauline circle. Although Paul addresses tongues only in the congregation where the gift is being abused (1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2–6, 13–14, 18–23, 26–27, 39), Barrett is undoubtedly correct that since Paul spoke in tongues much himself (1 Cor 14:18), others in the Pauline mission knew and often shared the experience.¹⁷⁸ It continued for some time over a wide geographic area.¹⁷⁹

Paul’s theological emphasis on “tongues” differs from Luke’s, but, against many, it is virtually inconceivable that the two writers would independently coin the same obscure phrase for two entirely different Spirit-given phenomena.

¹⁷⁶ D. Hilborn, “Glossolalia as Communication: A Linguistic-Pragmatic Perspective,” pages 111–46 in Cartledge, *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives*, 111–14, 128–29. If the speech is to God, as in 1 Cor 14:2, partial implicatures could symbolize a larger communication; the sounds might communicate through inference the way musical rhythm, keys, and so forth can communicate in given settings.

¹⁷⁷ See W. K. Kay, “The Mind, Behaviour, and Glossolalia: A Psychological Perspective,” pages 174–205 in Cartledge, *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives*.

¹⁷⁸ Barrett, *Acts*, 116.

¹⁷⁹ Forbes, *Prophecy*, 75–84; Mark 16:17; Irenaeus, *Her.* 5.6.1; Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.8; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.7.6.

Lukan “tongues” (especially Acts 2:4)	Pauline “tongues” (1 Cor 12–14)
“Tongues” (<i>glóssai</i>), i.e., “languages” (Acts 2:4)	“Tongues” (<i>glóssai</i>), i.e., “languages” ¹⁸⁰ (1 Cor 13:1; 14:10–11)
Tongues are inspired by the Spirit (Acts 2:4, 17–18)	Tongues are a gift from the Spirit (1 Cor 12:7–11)
The speakers apparently do not know the languages (Acts 2:4) ¹⁸¹	The speakers do not know the languages (1 Cor 14:13–15)
They were understandable (when some who recognized the languages were present [Acts 2:8–11], but apparently not in other cases [10:46; 19:6])	They were understandable (to those with supernatural interpretation [1 Cor 12:10, 30; 14:13])
They were not intelligible to those who did not recognize the languages (Acts 2:13; cf. 10:46; 19:6)	They are not normally intelligible (without a supernatural interpretation [1 Cor 14:2, 9–11, 19, 23])
They apparently function especially as inspired praise (Acts 2:11; cf. 10:46) ¹⁸²	They function especially as praise (1 Cor 14:15–17) and prayer (14:2, 14–15)
They could be associated with (though distinguishable from) other speech-gifts like prophecy (Acts 19:6), and are related to prophetic speech (2:17–18)	They could be associated with (though distinguishable from) other speech-gifts like prophecy (1 Cor 12:10; 14:2–6, 22–33, 39–40) ¹⁸³
Tongues-speech belongs to a larger sphere of the Spirit’s activity (e.g., visions and dreams, 2:17–18; cf. 2:43)	Tongues-speech belongs to a larger sphere of the Spirit’s activity (e.g., healings and miracles, 12:8–10, 28–30)
Tongues at least on this occasion functions as a sign to unbelievers (Acts 2:11–13)	Tongues can function as a sign to unbelievers (1 Cor 14:22)
The affective dimension of tongues-speech leads to some outsiders assuming the speakers’ drunkenness (Acts 2:13) ¹⁸⁴	The emotion of tongues-speech leads to outsiders assuming madness (1 Cor 14:23; cf. 14:11)
The gift of tongues-speech was God’s choice, not always mediated through human agency (Acts 2:4; 10:44–46), though such agency was possible (cf. 19:6)	Tongues-speech, like other gifts, was God’s sovereign choice (1 Cor 12:10–11), though individuals could apparently seek for gifts (12:31; 14:1, 39)

¹⁸⁰ In Paul, it is often “a tongue” (sing.; 1 Cor 14:2, 4, 9, 13, 14, 19, 26, 27), because he addresses individuals, whereas Luke describes a group. But where Paul addresses a group (and sometimes when he addresses individuals), he also is aware of the plural usage (1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:5, 6, 18, 22, 23, 39).

¹⁸¹ They did not learn them; they are “other” languages. This is unexpected for Galileans (2:7); and only the foreigners are said to understand the meaning (2:9–11).

¹⁸² Note that 10:46 employs *kai*, but in contrast to 19:6, not *te* . . . *kai*.

¹⁸³ Paul distinguishes “gifts” differently than Luke would (1 Cor 12:8–10, 28–30), though probably in an ad hoc way (cf. 14:6, 26; Rom 12:6–8), yet tongues remain Spirit-gifted speech.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. the affective component implied in prayer “with my spirit” (1 Cor 14:14–15).

That Luke and Paul depict unrelated phenomena demands too much coincidence for plausibility. Nevertheless, they apply the experience differently for their respective contexts:

Lukan “tongues” (especially Acts 2:4)	Pauline “tongues” (1 Cor 12–14)
Tongues begin in (Acts 2:5–11) and attest (10:45–46) the Spirit’s multicultural work	Paul addresses the use of tongues in a more homogeneous setting of Corinthian house churches (cf. 1 Cor 14:23) ¹⁸⁵
Hearers understood tongues (though only at Pentecost, with a linguistically diverse audience, not in other settings (10:46; 19:6))	Hearers would not (normally) understand the tongues (1 Cor 14:2, 16–19, 23)
Tongues are not abused in the instances described in Acts, which are positive	Tongues are abused in the instances presupposed in 1 Corinthians, although Paul affirms this experience as a divine gift (1 Cor 12:10; 14:26), especially valuable for private use (14:2, 4); he practices it privately (14:18); and he warns against forbidding its public use if accompanied by interpretation (14:39)
Multiple speakers apparently speak in tongues simultaneously, in group worship (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6) ¹⁸⁶	Those who speak in tongues should do so one at a time, allowing for interpretation of each (1 Cor 14:27–28)
Tongues are a sign of power to witness to the nations (Acts 1:8)	Tongues are one among many gifts (among the less useful in public), useful especially for private prayer
Tongues begin early in some believers’ experience with the Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6)	Tongues are one among many gifts (among the less useful in public), useful especially for private prayer
Luke does not use the analogy of the body and its members or speak of spiritual “gifts” (focusing instead on the “gift” of the Spirit)	Paul speaks of diverse gifts of grace (ideally especially as enablements for service to others) or of the Spirit in the context of a body with many members (Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:4–30)

The differences reflect different settings and especially the different purposes for which Luke and Paul address tongues-speech. Paul emphasizes the private, devotional use of tongues (1 Cor 14:4, 18–19) unless it is

¹⁸⁵ The Spirit’s activity more generally does, however, attest the Spirit’s multicultural work (Gal 3:5, 14).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. for prophetic speech in 1 Sam 10:5–6, 10; 19:20–24; perhaps 1 Chron 25:1–6.

accompanied with an inspired interpretation (1 Cor 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26–28); Luke associates it with his theme of prophetically empowered worldwide evangelism. ****

2:5–13: THE CROWD'S RESPONSES TO SIGNS

The scene with disciples speaking in “other” tongues by the Spirit’s inspiration opens directly into a mention of the Diaspora Jewish crowds that recognized these languages (2:5–13).¹⁸⁷ Diaspora Jews in the Mediterranean world spoke Greek,¹⁸⁸ those to the east spoke Aramaic. Many would, however, be familiar enough with local dialects in their regions to recognize (as opposed to communicate fluently) in those languages.¹⁸⁹

Every nation under heaven (2:5) is hyperbolic (cf. 2:9–11), but sufficiently representative for Luke’s purposes; the biblical idiom *under heaven* was readily intelligible.¹⁹⁰ Jews were widely dispersed, the strong majority living outside Judea.¹⁹¹ That they were *living in Jerusalem* (2:5) favors their now being residents rather than visitors (cf. 2:14),¹⁹² but this is not true for all of them since Luke uses the same term for *residents* of Mesopotamia present for the festival in 2:9. Perhaps Luke leaves some ambiguity to include visitors for the festival as well without expending space to explain this; given the distance many pilgrims traveled, some may have stayed for the seven weeks after Passover. The residents will resurface prominently in Acts 6:1, 5. In any case, their narrative function seems clear: as Jews with foreign cultural backgrounds, they prefigure the Diaspora mission for which the Spirit is empowering the disciples (Acts 1:8; 2:39).

A *crowd* (2:6) represents a frequent composite character in ancient historiography, although elite writers often depict them as vulnerable to

¹⁸⁷ Those describing festivals often liked to emphasize the vast crowds and how far they had come (Menander Rhetor 1.3, 366.9–10, 24–28).

¹⁸⁸ Even in Rome (Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 75–77) and Alexandria (see *CPJ*).

¹⁸⁹ Some interpreters suggest a hearing rather than speaking miracle here, but Luke specifies speaking in other languages in Acts 2:4; no hearing miracle appears in 10:45–46; 19:6; and Luke emphasizes esp. the Spirit working through speakers (4:8, 31; 6:3, 10; 10:38; 13:9–11; 21:4, 11).

¹⁹⁰ Cf., e.g., 4:12; Col 1:23; Deut 2:25; 4:19; Dan 7:27; 9:12; 2 Macc 2:18; Eupolemus 2.12; 4 Ezra 11:6.

¹⁹¹ See, e.g., M. Stern, “The Jewish Diaspora,” 117–83 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 117–22; cf. Diodorus Siculus 40.3.8.

¹⁹² Nearly all twenty-one uses of *katoikeô* in Luke-Acts could designate long-term residents, often for resident aliens; only Romans are called *visitors* (2:10). Archaeology confirms that many Diaspora immigrants settled in Jerusalem in this era.

demagogues.¹⁹³ Although they are sometimes easily aroused negatively in Acts (Acts 16:22; 17:8, 13),¹⁹⁴ Luke's crowds are often more positive (e.g., Luke 1:10; 3:10; 4:42; 5:1; Acts 8:6; 11:24, 26). Here they are astonished (2:6–7, 12), a familiar Lukan response to divine activity (Luke 1:21, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14; 20:26; 24:12, 41; Acts 3:12; 4:13; 7:31).¹⁹⁵ Since many considered rural *Galileans* (2:7) the antithesis of cosmopolitan persons (cf. Luke 22:59), their apparent universal linguistic proficiency seems all the more astonishing (2:6–7). Luke's particular term for *bewildered* in 2:6, however, probably foreshadows his allusion to Babel.¹⁹⁶

Immediately after Jesus received the Spirit (Luke 3:21–22), Luke listed generations back to Adam, the progenitor of humanity; here, after the parallel gift of the Spirit in Acts, he lists the nations with the same universal allusion to all humanity.¹⁹⁷ Ancient writers liked lists more than modern readers do.¹⁹⁸ Luke's arrangement of the nations has provoked some discussion,¹⁹⁹ as has been the question of his literary source for the list.

The biblically literate, however, might perceive a model in the foundational biblical list of nations in Gen 10, which, not coincidentally in the present context, directly precedes the Babel narrative (11:1–9). Luke surely knows of nations not on his list; India, China, Nubia, Gauls, Germans, and Scythians were widely known (see comment on Acts 1:8), including to Luke (8:27). But Luke's list may reflect an updating of the table of nations in Gen 10.²⁰⁰ He includes only a sample of the seventy nations from Genesis 10. Updating the names of the nations was common even in paraphrases of Genesis 10; later Targums, but most importantly the first-century Jewish

¹⁹³ E.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.3.27, 47; Diodorus Siculus 10.7.3; 15.58.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.8.1; 7.31.1; 7.56.2; 8.31.4; 9.32.4; 10.18.3; Livy 3.71.5; 6.11.7; 22.34.2; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 2.9; 3.7.1; 7.3.18; 11.7.40; *Bell. civ.* 1.5.34.

¹⁹⁴ The "crowds" play a less hostile role in Jesus's crucifixion (Luke 23:4) than in Mk 15:11, 15. Luke's term in 2:6 refers to God's people more often than the other term (Acts 4:36; 6:5; 15:12, 30).

¹⁹⁵ And a natural one; cf., e.g., 1 *En.* 26:6; *Sib. Or.* 1.32; *T. Ab.* 3:12; 6:8; 7:10 A.

¹⁹⁶ See the verb and cognates in Luke 11:7–9 LXX (with a particularly high concentration); Babel in Wis 10:5; Philo, *Conf.* 1, 84, 152; and esp. 168, 182, 189, 191; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.117.

¹⁹⁷ Johnson, *Acts*, 47.

¹⁹⁸ Even lists of locations from which visitors to a widely attended festival came (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 9.5).

¹⁹⁹ His list begins in the east, mentions the holy land, then turns north, south, west (Rome), and then circles back, possibly depicting Jerusalem as the world's theological "center" (see comment on 1:8). Most scholars now dismiss the eccentric idea that Luke follows an astrological list as a source here; far better parallels exist (Barrett, *Acts*, 121), including (relevantly for this context) lists of where Diaspora Jews lived (Philo, *Flacc.* 45–46; *Embassy* 281–82; cf. 1 Macc 15:23).

²⁰⁰ For the table of nations tradition in Second Temple Judaism, see Scott, "Horizon," 507–22; Bechard, *Walls*, 173–209.

historian Josephus, overlap with many of Luke's updated names.²⁰¹ Just as context helps us recognize Babel in some other early Jewish allusions,²⁰² so the collocation of themes from Gen 10 and 11 helps us recognize it in Acts 2.

Many understand Acts 2 as a reversal of the widely known Babel story (Gen 11:1–9)²⁰³ and believe that Luke patterned his narrative after it;²⁰⁴ some ancient commentators made the same connection.²⁰⁵ In Genesis 11:7, God descends to confound the transgressors, but at Pentecost God descends, more positively (Acts 2:33). In Genesis, God scatters tongues to shatter unity; in Acts, the Spirit scatters a united people's (1:14; 2:1) tongues to establish greater unity (2:42, 44–46). The apostles have begun to fulfill their commission to announce the gospel *to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Luke 24:47). Although the mission of 1:8 is nowhere near completed here (or for that matter, in 28:16–31), Luke provides a narrative foretaste.

A Closer Look: The Peoples of Acts 2:9–11

Some names appear in Luke's sample because they will recur in Acts, and others simply as well-known regions. Scholars publish entire works on some of these peoples, so only sample information appears here.

Many Jews had never returned from the Babylonian exile, so the names from Parthia through Mesopotamia (which Parthia controlled) recall not simply the furthest points east, but the places of the longest exile.²⁰⁶ "Mesopotamia" is Greek for the OT Aram-naharaim or Paddan-Aram.²⁰⁷

²⁰¹ E.g., *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 10:2–14; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Gen 10:2–14; *Tg.* to 1 Chron 1:5–17; esp. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.122–47. On updated lists see Scott, "Horizon," 521–22, 529.

²⁰² It follows Adam in 1QM 10.14 and the flood in Wis 10:4–5.

²⁰³ See *Jub.* 10:18–26; Philo, *Confusion*; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.116–18; *LAB* ch. 7; *Sib. Or.* 3.98–107; 8.4–5; 11.9–13.

²⁰⁴ E.g., C. D. F. Moule, *Christ's Messengers: Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Association, 1957), 23; Spencer, *Acts*, 32–33; G. Chéreau, "De Babel à la Pentecôte: Histoire d'une bénédiction," *NRTh* 122 (1, 2000): 19–36; Pervo, *Acts*, 61–62; K. Asamoah-Gyadu, "'Hearing in Our Own Tongues the Wonderful Works of God': Pentecost, Ecumenism and Renewal in African Christianity," *Missionalia* 35 (3, Nov. 2007): 128–45; C. Wackenheim, "De Babel à Pentecôte," *LumVie* 58 (281, 2009): 47–56; Green, "Acts," 739.

²⁰⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture* 17.16–17; Arator, *Acts* 1; Bede, *Comm. Acts* 2.4; see other patristic sources in Marguerat, *Actes*, 81 n. 45.

²⁰⁶ Excluding a small outpost like Elephantine in Egypt. On Babylonian and Parthian Jewry, see Stern, "Diaspora," 170–79.

²⁰⁷ On Mesopotamia, see Pliny, *Nat.* 6.30.117–20. Pliny thinks that the Assyrians had few cities until Macedonian times (117).

The largest concentration of Parthian Jews was in Babylonia; the second largest was in northern Mesopotamia (related to the Assyrian exile).²⁰⁸ For Luke, this was the very region from which Abraham hailed (Acts 7:2).

Judeans maintained close contacts with their Parthian Jewish kin, so the gospel surely did travel east in the first generation,²⁰⁹ though Luke's focus is the empire where his audience lived. Parthians were, however, among Rome's most feared enemies,²¹⁰ including often in the first century,²¹¹ so Judeans' ethnic ties with many Jews in Parthia made Rome uncomfortable.²¹² The anxiety their mention might cause some of Luke's audience might function rhetorically in a manner similar to how Peter's ministry to Cornelius's household unnerved the Jerusalem church (11:3–18), challenging traditional prejudices and hostilities.

Judeans from outside Jerusalem were also present, even though fewer of these would recognize the languages spoken. Herod's family had close ties with a king of *Cappadocia*, in northern Asia Minor.²¹³ It was near *Pontus*, from which Aquila came (Acts 18:2); some Judeans had settled this far north, on the southern coast of the Black Sea.²¹⁴ The church eventually had many adherents there.²¹⁵ The Roman province of *Asia*, of which Ephesus was the most prominent city, figures heavily in Acts (esp. 19:10–41) and became a thriving center of early Christianity (cf. Rev 1:4). *Phrygia* had some large Jewish communities²¹⁶ and reappears in Acts (13:51–14:19; 16:6; 18:23), as does *Pamphylia* (13:13; 14:24; 27:5).²¹⁷

²⁰⁸ Stern, "Diaspora," 170–71.

²⁰⁹ R. Bauckham, "What If Paul Had Travelled East Rather Than West?" *BibInt* 8 (1–2, 2000): 171–84 (180). On Parthia, see Pliny, *Nat.* 6.29.112–6.31.141.

²¹⁰ Cf., e.g., Sallust, *Mith.* 1–23; Horace, *Sat.* 2.1.15; Martial, *Epig.* 2.53; for Jewish fears, 1 *En.* 56:5–7; *Sib. Or.* 4.139; 5.438 (they tried to seize Judea in 40 BCE, Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9).

²¹¹ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.69–73; Suetonius, *Aug.* 21.3; cf. as possible hosts for a fugitive Nero (Suetonius, *Nero* 47.2).

²¹² J. Neusner, *There We Sat Down: Talmudic Judaism in the Making* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1972), 48.

²¹³ Josephus, *Ant.* 16.11, 74, 131, 261, 269, 302, 309, 325, 357; 17.350; 18.139; *War* 1.446, 499–501, 530, 553; 2.114.

²¹⁴ Philo, *Embassy* 281.

²¹⁵ See 1 Pet 1:1; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.6.

²¹⁶ See Josephus, *Ant.* 12.147; Stern, "Diaspora," 149–50; A. T. Kraabel, "Judaism in Western Asia Minor under the Roman Empire, with a Preliminary Study of the Jewish Community at Sardis, Lydia" (ThD dissertation, Harvard Divinity School, 1968), 61ff. (for syncretism, see, e.g., 81–86, 142, 146).

²¹⁷ For Jews in Pamphylia, see, e.g., 1 Macc 15:23; Philo, *Embassy* 281.

Many Jews lived in first-century Egypt;²¹⁸ although Philo might exaggerate, he claims a million Jews in Egypt, mostly in Alexandria, two of the five districts of which were Jewish.²¹⁹ Although Greek was the dominant language in urban Egypt (see comment on Acts 21:38), the Egyptian language endured (though by the second century sometimes written in a combination of demotic and Greek scripts).²²⁰

Libya was known for its fertility and animals.²²¹ Cyrenaica in Libya had five, somewhat distantly spaced, prominent cities, one of which was Cyrene itself; Cyrene was 11 miles from the sea, but had a harbor there.²²² Cyrene's Jewish population originally came especially from Egypt, which adjoined Libya.²²³ Cyrene's Jewish population was quite large and appears frequently in ancient sources.²²⁴ Like the Jewish community in Egypt, many Jews around Cyrene ultimately revolted, leading to their devastation.²²⁵

Visitors from Rome (2:10) sets Romans apart, perhaps because of Acts' geographic goal (Acts 28:14–31). Apart from *Cretans and Arabs* in 2:11, *Rome* holds the climactic geographic position here (2:10). We know the names and locations of various Jewish communities in first-century Rome; see comment on 28:17. Rome also had many proselytes, more than xenophobic Romans appreciated;²²⁶ sincere proselytes made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, just like other Jews.²²⁷ Clearly there were Jewish believers in Rome well before 49 CE, when Claudius expelled many of them (see comment on Acts 18:2). Whereas the Antioch mission, with its more lenient approach to gentile conversion, planted churches in Asia and Greece, the Roman church (with its initial interest in circumcision, food laws, and holy days; see Rom 2:25–29; 14:1–23) probably was founded

²¹⁸ See Josephus, *Ant.* 14.116–18; Stern, “Diaspora,” 122–33; comment on Acts 18:24.

²¹⁹ Philo, *Flacc.* 43, 55.

²²⁰ This evolved into Coptic, which long persisted until replaced, after centuries of Islamic rule, with Arabic even in the churches, which retained a very limited role for Coptic (S. Emmel, “Coptic Language,” *ABD* 4:180–88).

²²¹ Polybius 12.3.1–6; so also the more desert Cyrene in Arrian *Indica* 43.13.

²²² Pliny, *Nat.* 5.5.31–32.

²²³ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.118; *Ag. Ap.* 2.44. Rome divided Cyrene from Egypt, though it was once controlled by the Ptolemies (Strabo 17.1.5).

²²⁴ Acts 6:9; 11:20; 13:1; Luke 23:26; Mark 15:21; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.115; 16.169; cf. 1 Macc 15:23; 2 Macc 2:23; see esp. S. Applebaum, *Jews and Greeks in Cyrene* (SJLA 28; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 130–200.

²²⁵ Josephus, *War* 7.437.

²²⁶ See comment on Acts 16:20; cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.60–63.

²²⁷ See S. Safrai, “Relations between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel,” 184–215 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 199–200.

directly by Judeans from Jerusalem. The mention of *proselytes*, gentile converts to Judaism, offers a narrative transition toward gentiles (6:5; cf. 13:43).²²⁸

Other ancient lists included something like Luke's unexpected final "coda" (*Cretans and Arabs*) in 2:11.²²⁹ Crete, which had a significant Jewish community,²³⁰ figures significantly in Acts 27. In this period the *Arabs* with whom Jews had the most contact were Nabateans, at this time a powerful kingdom under Aretas IV (9 BCE to 40 CE).²³¹ Judea and Nabatea had significant contact.²³² Nabateans controlled a caravan route that stretched especially to Damascus in the northeast and Sinai in the southwest, or further.²³³ Cf. note on 9:23. ****

Bridging Horizons: Pentecost and Global Christianity

Despite earlier precedents, such as at Pandita Ramabai's orphanage in India, Pentecostalism became known as a global movement especially at the multicultural, Los Angeles Azusa Street Mission in 1906, under the leadership of a young African-American preacher by the name of William Seymour. The Pentecost narrative was seminal for this movement, which initially envisioned itself as a force for renewing Christianity. Some early Pentecostals read their experience as a reversal of Babel.²³⁴

Now a growing academic subject,²³⁵ global pentecostalism (commonly defined to include Pentecostal and charismatic Christians) has become the

²²⁸ On *proselytes*, see further discussion in Keener, *John*, 445–46, 542–44; here, cf. D.-A. Koch, "Proselyten und Gottesfürchtige als Hörer der Reden von Apostelgeschichte 2,14–39 und 13,16–41," pages 83–107 in *Die Apostelgeschichte und die hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung* (ed. C. Breytenbach and J. Schröter; Leiden: Brill, 2004).

²²⁹ Metzger, "Astrological Geography," 132.

²³⁰ 1 Macc 15:23; Philo, *Embassy* 282; Josephus, *War* 2.103; *Ant.* 17.327; *Life* 427; Tit 1:10–14; P. W. van der Horst, "The Jews of Ancient Crete," *JJS* 39 (2, 1988): 183–200.

²³¹ Arabia in general included various regions and tribes (e.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 5.12.65–6.32.162), including tent-dwelling nomads (5.15.72; 6.32.143) but also town-dwellers in Petra (6.32.144). Aretas appears in Josephus, *Ant.* 16.353–55; 18.109–16; 2 Cor 11:32.

²³² See *Let. Aris.* 114, 119; C. H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (New York: Scribner's, 1951), 89; Hengel and Schwemer, *Damascus and Antioch*, 112; Z. Meshel, "The Nabataean 'Rock' and the Judaean Desert Fortresses," *IEJ* 50 (1–2, 2000): 109–15.

²³³ See Strabo 16.4.2; A. Negev, "Understanding the Nabateans," *BAR* 14 (6, 1988): 26–45. They controlled the only real kingdom in the northern Arabian peninsula (J. Pahlitzsch, "Arabia," *BNP* 1:939–41 [940]).

²³⁴ A. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44.

²³⁵ See, e.g., A. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*; idem, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford

largest movement in Christendom next to the Roman Catholic Church, with which it overlaps. Historian Robert Bruce Mullin observes that already by the end of the twentieth century there were “more Pentecostals worldwide” than mainline Protestants;²³⁶ historian Douglas Sweeney calls “Holiness-Pentecostalism,” “[p]erhaps the fastest-growing movement that the church has ever seen.”²³⁷ Estimates of its size vary, with half a billion being a common estimate;²³⁸ it flourishes especially (though not exclusively) outside the West.²³⁹ That much growth today in Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and other denominations also comes from the Majority World is no longer news in much of the West.²⁴⁰ Readings from these diverse social locations can and must enrich and balance traditional Western readings.²⁴¹

University Press, 2013); W. Richards, “An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria, and Argentina,” *JAM* 7 (1, 2005): 85–106; D. E. Miller and T. Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); A. Anderson, M. Bergunder, A. Droogers, and C. van der Laan, *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010); C. G. Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*.

²³⁶ R. B. Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 211 (cf. 276); cf. similarly M. A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 22, 32.

²³⁷ D. A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 153.

²³⁸ See, e.g., D. B. Barrett, “Statistics, Global,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 810–29 (813); L. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 275. Because evangelism outpaces training, some projections might decline. A. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 11, is more nuanced.

²³⁹ See, e.g., A. Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 33–80; for its growth in much of Asia, see, e.g., W. Ma, “Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context,” pages 59–91 in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (ed. A. Anderson and E. Tang; Oxford: Regnum, 2005); H. Yung, “Pentecostalism and the Asian Church,” pages 37–57 in *ibid.*; A. Anderson, “The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia,” pages 1–12 in *ibid.*; in Africa, e.g., D. Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 6–7.

²⁴⁰ Particularly influentially, see P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²⁴¹ For such readings, see, e.g., P. Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); *idem*, “Reading the Bible in the Global South,” *IBMR* 30 (2, 2006): 67–73; C. S. Keener and M. D. Carroll R., eds., *Global Voices: Reading the Bible in the Majority World* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013).

Luke's narrative of Pentecost, which connects the Spirit with the church's equipping across all cultures, offers a valuable paradigm for today's multicultural church. Indeed, because Luke's emphasis on the Spirit is empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8), the almost immediate reception of the Spirit by Samaritan and gentile believers (8:14–17; 10:44–48) speaks of mission partnership rather than paternalism. Many today thus view the globalization of Christianity, the church's global multiculturalism, or the Christian mission's sensitivity to indigenous languages and cultures as theological extensions of Pentecost.²⁴² Early Pentecostals also valued this insight, which challenged (and was quickly challenged by) the prevailing racial norms of their era.²⁴³ ****

The hearers' *speaking about God's deeds of power* (Acts 2:11) probably refers to them praising God, as when a cognate verb connects with speaking in tongues in 10:46 (cf. Luke 1:46).²⁴⁴ In view of Acts 10:46 and the use of tongues for prayer and worship in Paul (1 Cor 14:14–17), it seems likely that the crowds heard the disciples worshipping God.²⁴⁵ Their question, *What does this mean?* (2:12) refers to the phenomenon of the tongues-speaking (2:6);²⁴⁶ Peter's answer begins in 2:16: *this is what was spoken*.

Not everyone in the crowd, however, is so impressed; some, in fact, become hecklers (2:13). Luke often refers to divided crowds (e.g., 14:1–4; 17:12–13, 18, 32; 19:9; 28:24), usually implying that one group is more receptive to the message than the other (17:32–34; 23:7–9). Mockery was

²⁴² E.g., K. Bediako, "Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective," pages 93–121 in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology* (ed. W. A. Dyrness; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 120; J. L. González, *Three Months with the Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 18; S. Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (JPTSup 14; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 112–18; J. Míguez-Bonino, "Acts 2:1–42: A Latin American Perspective," pages 161–65 in *Return to Babel: Global Perspectives on the Bible* (ed. J. R. Levison and P. Pope-Levison; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 163–64; C. S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 59–60; cf. Marguerat, *Actes*, 81; at length, cf. R. B. Harms, *Paradigms from Luke-Acts for Multicultural Communities* (New York: Lang, 2001).

²⁴³ See, e.g., C. M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2006), 88, 137–38; Yong, *Spirit Poured*, 183. Ethnic and class reconciliation is a natural application of the passage; see, e.g., Yong, *Spirit Poured*, 94, 169–73; A. S. Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 130–32; C. S. Keener, "Day of Pentecost, Years A, B, C: First Lesson – Acts 2:1–21," 1:524–28 in *The Lectionary Commentary* (ed. R. E. Van Harn; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 526–27.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Ps 70:19 LXX (= Ps 71:19); 150:2; esp. T. Job 51:4.

²⁴⁵ With also Turner, *Power*, 271–72.

²⁴⁶ Not only to "this sound," where "this" (*tautès*) is feminine, as opposed to *touto* in 2:12, 16.

so common that ancient rhetoricians remarked on appropriate rhetorical ways to implement or counter it. Hecklers commonly interrupted speakers with questions or objections.²⁴⁷

In this case some complain that the disciples are drunk, *filled with new wine* (2:13). Literally this is “sweet wine,” normally unfermented must, though by Pentecost all of the previous year’s vintage would be fermented.²⁴⁸ Normally sweet wine would not make one drunk,²⁴⁹ although there were some wines that were both aged and sweet,²⁵⁰ and people often sweetened wines with honey or other additives.²⁵¹ But people normally diluted wine with double to quadruple the quantity of water; one could get drunk on wine with even low alcohol content if one drank enough of it undiluted.²⁵² The hecklers may thus mock the disciples as being not only drunk, but having made due with weaker wine to this effect by means of gluttony.²⁵³ Luke’s informed audience, by contrast, may think of something else: the new wine of the kingdom (Luke 5:37–39).²⁵⁴

The charge that the disciples are drunk is analogous to an official later charging Paul with madness for his impassioned speech (Acts 26:24).²⁵⁵ That early Christians could deliberately contrast Spirit-filled worship with drunkenness (Eph 5:18–19) suggests a degree of exuberance.²⁵⁶ Greeks could associate ecstasy with drunkenness, or “Bacchic” frenzy;²⁵⁷ although

²⁴⁷ E.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 18, 1432b.35–40; 1433a.14–25; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.138; *Prov. cons.* 8.18; Seneca, *Controv.* 3, pref. 4–5; Plutarch, *Lect.* 4, *Mor.* 39CD; 11, *Mor.* 43BC; 18, *Mor.* 48AB; *Demosth.* 6.3; 8.5; Cicero 16.3; Apuleius, *Flor.* 9.4–5.

²⁴⁸ Cf. the eschatological sweet wine of Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13.

²⁴⁹ Aelian, *Farmers* 8 (Opora to Dercyllus); Plutarch, *T.-T.* 3.7.3, *Mor.* 656B.

²⁵⁰ *OCD*³ 1622; cf. Lucian, *Lucius* 3.

²⁵¹ Cf., e.g., Le Cornu, *Acts*, 88; Pliny, *Nat.* 22.53.113–22.54.115; Eunapius, *Lives* 463; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 10.432C. Unlike the hecklers here, many used honey as a metaphor for sweet speech (e.g., Herodes, *Mime* 3.93; Prov 16:24).

²⁵² Cf. various mixtures in Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 10.426CE, 430A. Drinking undiluted wine could be dangerous and ignorant; see Theophrastus, *Char.* 4.6; Apollonius Rhodius 1.473; Diodorus Siculus 4.4.6; 10.1.15; Plutarch, *Poetry* 1, *Mor.* 15E; *T.T.* 1.4.3, *Mor.* 621CD; Diogenes Laertius 7.7.184.

²⁵³ Ancients condemned gluttony almost as widely as it was practiced; see, e.g., Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 60.4; Musonius Rufus 18A, p. 112.6–7, 29; 18B, p. 116.4–22, 25–33; 18B, p. 118.4–5, 9, 16–19; Pliny, *Nat.* 11.119.284; 28.14.56; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.148, 192; 4.91; *Alleg.* 3.159, 161, 221.

²⁵⁴ So also Bede, *Comm. Acts* 2.13 (who contends that the mockers ironically speak truth); cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture* 17.18.

²⁵⁵ Perhaps due to apparent inspiration (cf. 26:25, employing the verb for “utter” used in 2:4). Cf. outsiders’ view of pneumatic experience in 1 Cor 14:23; 2 Cor 5:13.

²⁵⁶ Luke also contrasts strong drink with being filled with the Spirit in Luke 1:15.

²⁵⁷ E.g., Strabo 10.3.13; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 27.2; Van der Horst, “Parallels to Acts,” 55.

mantic (prophetic, associated with Apollo) and Dionysian ecstasies were distinct,²⁵⁸ they were sometimes confused.²⁵⁹ Philo uses inebriation as a symbol of divine intoxication,²⁶⁰ however, and Luke's audience will see behind the hecklers' charge instead the Spirit's inspiration of the believers.

A Closer Look: Alcohol in Mediterranean Antiquity

Most ancients did not object to moderate drinking,²⁶¹ and many praised the benefits of wine.²⁶² Nevertheless, many warned about the negative effects of drunkenness,²⁶³ and praised those who could maintain sobriety.²⁶⁴ Drunkenness confused the mind.²⁶⁵

A major danger of excess drinking was shameful loss of control,²⁶⁶ so intoxicated persons would commit offenses that a sober person would find shameful.²⁶⁷ This could lead to embarrassing behavior at banquets²⁶⁸ and inability to make one's way out properly.²⁶⁹ Drunkenness loosened tongues;²⁷⁰ it also made people vulnerable to other dangers.²⁷¹ Drunkenness

²⁵⁸ Cf., e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.56–58; Iamblichus, *Myst.* 3.25.

²⁵⁹ So Aune, *Prophecy*, 21, 42; cf. Lucan, *C.W.* 1.673–95. Occasionally Bacchic frenzy could produce mantic prophecy (Euripides, *Bacch.* 298–99), and a few circles even used drunkenness to induce religious ecstasy (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.20.17), though it was not used to secure oracles (Forbes, *Prophecy*, 282).

²⁶⁰ E.g., Philo, *Creation* 71; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.82; *Drunkenness* 147; *Dreams* 2.190; *Flight* 166; *Contempl.* 84; Isaacs, *Spirit*, 50.

²⁶¹ E.g., Xenophon, *Symp.* 2.24–26; Plutarch, *T.-T.* 3, intro, *Mor.* 645A; Aulus Gellius 15.2.4–5; Crates, *Ep.* 10.

²⁶² E.g., Tibullus 1.7.39–42; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 2.36–37; Sir 34[31]:27–28; cf. Prov 31:4–7.

²⁶³ Euripides, *Cycl.* 678; Diodorus Siculus 15.74.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.11.3; Pliny, *Nat.* 14.28.137–148; Plutarch, *Alc.* 16.1; *Luc.* 39.1–2; *Alex.* 70.1; 75.3–4.

²⁶⁴ E.g., Xenophon, *Lac.* 5.4–7; Velleius Paterculus 2.41.1–2; Suetonius, *Jul.* 53; *Aug.* 77.

²⁶⁵ E.g., Isocrates, *Demon.* 32; Pindar, *Encomia* frg. 124; Anacharsis, *Ep.* 3.1–3; Plutarch, *Isis* 6, *Mor.* 353C.

²⁶⁶ E.g., Demosthenes, *Con.* 7; Horace, *Sat.* 1.3.90–91; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 83.19–20; *Dial.* 5.37.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.55.

²⁶⁷ Aeschines, *Tim.* 59–61; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 1.109; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 27.2; Martial, *Epigr.* 3.16.3; 3.48.5–10; Plutarch, *Alc.* 19.1; Diogenes Laertius 1.76.

²⁶⁸ E.g., Plutarch, *T.-T.* 3.intro, *Mor.* 645A; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 27.2; *Sipre Deut.* 43.8.1.

²⁶⁹ Polybius 31.13.8; cf. many trampled when fleeing a banquet drunk in Polybius 14.4.9–10.

²⁷⁰ Josephus, *Life* 225; Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.3.8; Philostratus, *Hrk.* 18.5.

²⁷¹ Homer, *Od.* 9.105–542; Euripides, *Cyclops* 488–94, 678; Herodotus 1.211–12; Polybius 8.30.6; Ovid, *Her.* 14.42; Livy 33.28.2; Jdt 13:2, 15; *LAB* 43:6; Josephus, *Life* 388.

often produced violence²⁷² and facilitated sexual license²⁷³ or both.²⁷⁴ It was commonplace at banquets and cultic festivals.

Many philosophers opposed drunkenness;²⁷⁵ Pythagoras and his followers even practiced abstinence.²⁷⁶ Jewish writers also warned against excess drinking and drunkenness;²⁷⁷ early Christians also valued sobriety.²⁷⁸ ****

2:14–21: PROPHECY OF PENTECOST

Hellenistic historians sought to offer speeches suitable to the speakers; Peter's style here is saturated with the Septuagint. Despite disdain for speakers without training (cf. 4:13), people praised those quick-witted in debate and skillful in spontaneous composition.²⁷⁹ That Jesus called Peter not as a member of the educated, hellenized urban elite of Jerusalem or even as a traditional scribe, but as a Galilean fisherman, highlights the remarkable character of his transformation.²⁸⁰ Jesus had promised that Peter would become a fisher of people (Luke 5:10); Peter's success glorifies not himself but his mentor (Acts 4:13).

Against some, Luke probably presumes that Peter preaches in Greek here rather than Aramaic. Mesopotamians (2:9) undoubtedly spoke various dialects of Aramaic, but much of the audience in 2:9–11 would be Greek-speaking; the Septuagint quotes also suggest preaching in Greek, although Luke, writing in Greek, would have cited the Greek version in any case.

Structurally, the speech's end echoes its beginning, in good rhetorical fashion, on two points: baptism in Jesus's name (2:38) fulfills "calling on

²⁷² E.g., Euripides, *Cycl.* 534; Aeschines, *Tim.* 59; Diodorus Siculus 4.4.6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 51.1–6.

²⁷³ Cf. Valerius Maximus 4.3. ext. 3a; 9.1.8; Lucian, *Nigr.* 15; *True Story* 2.46; Sir 19:2; *T. Jud.* 14:1–8. This was why early Romans forbade it to women (Valerius Maximus 2.1.5b); one husband allegedly cudgelled his wife to death for drinking wine (6.3.9); but courtesans might use it to loosen up (Aelian, *Farmers* 9).

²⁷⁴ Polybius 6.7.5.

²⁷⁵ E.g., Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 58:33; 83; *Dial.* 7.12.3; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.12.11; Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.10e, p. 62.20–23; 2.7.11m, p. 88.34–39. For exceptions, see Diogenes Laertius 7.1.26; 10.119.

²⁷⁶ Iamblichus, *V.P.* 3.13; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 2.7, 36; 6.11; cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.9, 19.

²⁷⁷ E.g., Sir 31[34]:25–31; *Syr. Men. Sent.* 52–58; 1QpHab 11.13–14; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.195, 204; Philo, *Flacc.* 4, 136; *Mos.* 2.162; *T. Jud.* 16:1, 3; *T. Iss.* 7:3; *Sipra Shemini* par. 1.100.1.2–3.

²⁷⁸ Luke 21:34; Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:10; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:18; 1 Tim 3:3, 8; Tit 1:7; 2:3; 1 Pet 4:3; 1 *Clem.* 30.1; Hermas 36.5; 38.3; 65.5.

²⁷⁹ E.g., Seneca, *Controv.* 4. pref. 7; 10. pref. 2; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.3.1; Suetonius, *Gramm.* 23; Tacitus, *Dial.* 6; Lucian, *Prof. P.S.* 20; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.24.529.

²⁸⁰ Chrysostom contrasts Peter's boldness with his previous denials of Jesus (*Hom. Acts* 4).

the Lord" (2:21), and the promise of the Spirit (2:38) alludes to Joel's quoted words in 2:17–18 (as well as to Jesus's words known to Luke's audience in 1:4–5). The *peroratio* (closing exhortation) of 2:40 echoes the end of 2:21 (saved).²⁸¹ The addresses in 2:14, 22, 29, and 37 might also serve as structural markers.²⁸² Although chiasmic structures often lie only in the beholder's imagination, this speech appears to contain an elaborate but genuine chiasmic pattern in one section (2:22–36).²⁸³

- A This one . . . you *crucified* and killed (2:23)
- B But God *raised* him up . . . (2:24)
- C *David says* + Psalm 16 quote involving right hand (2:25–28)
 - a. *Men, brothers, b. it is necessary to speak c. to you boldly* (2:29)
- D the patriarch *David died* . . . (2:29)
- E Being therefore a *prophet*, and knowing (2:30)
- F that God had sworn an *oath* to him (2:30)
- G that he would set one of his descendants *upon his throne* (2:30)
- H he *foresaw and spoke* (2:31)
- I of the *resurrection* of Christ (2:31)
- J that he was not abandoned to *Hades* (2:31)
- J' nor did his flesh see *corruption* (2:31)
- I' This Jesus God *raised up* (2:32)
- H' of that we are all *witnesses* (2:32)
- G' Being therefore exalted *at the right hand of God* (2:33)
- F' having received from the Father the *promise* of the Holy Spirit (2:33)
- E' he has poured out this [*phenomenon*] which you see and hear (2:33)
- D' For *David did not ascend* into the heavens (2:34)
- C' But *he himself says* + Psalm 110 quote involving right hand (2:34–35)
 - c. *Assuredly therefore b. let it be known to a. all the house of Israel* (2:36)
- B' that God has made him *Lord and Christ* (2:36)
- A' this Jesus, whom you *crucified*²⁸⁴ (2:36)

²⁸¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 139. Such *inclusio*, or verbal bracketing, was a common literary technique (e.g., Ps 8:1, 9; Luke 15:24, 32; 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1; Catullus 52.1, 4; 57.1, 10; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.16.1, 13; J. D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998], 66–67, 75–76, 91–92, 102–3, 289).

²⁸² Gaventa, *Acts*, 73.

²⁸³ See Bailey, *Poet*, 65–66. Although the label first appears in Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.3.181, the form of chiasmus is much older; see Harvey, *Listening*, 61–82, 98; A. Stock, "Chiasmic Awareness and Education in Antiquity," *BTB* 14 (1, 1984): 23–27.

²⁸⁴ Slightly adapted, but mostly reproduced, from Bailey, *Poet*, 65–66.

The weakest points in this proposed parallelism are probably B, E, F, H, and J; but Luke’s explicit connection among the Spirit, prophecy, and witness (1:8; 2:17–18) probably also support E and H. If we link A with J (questionable), B with I (stronger), C with H (likely), D with G (likely), and E with F (possible), the weaker points of the chiastic structure are strengthened, yielding an even more complex literary structure of double chiasm.²⁸⁵

Death	Resurrection	Witness	Enthronement	Coming of Spirit
You crucified>	God raised>	David says>	David died (not enthroned)>	Prophet knew>
<Hades	<resurrection	<Saw and spoke	<His throne	<(God swore)
Corruption>	God raised>	We are witnesses>	Exalted to the right hand>	Promise of the Spirit>
You crucified	<God made him Lord and Christ	<(David said)	<David did not ascend	<Spirit poured out

Not every element works at every point, but the cumulative force of most of the structure seems compelling. Luke has given special attention to this speech (cf. 2:40a); ancient readers would not expect such an extended structure extemporaneously.

Although Peter is the lead speaker, his fellow witnesses stand with him. Speakers would normally stand to offer public addresses.²⁸⁶ Speakers often lectured at temples, which were public space,²⁸⁷ and often drew crowds at festivals.²⁸⁸ The temple steps might offer a helpful acoustic setting, but Peter would still need to project his voice loudly. Difficult as it is to imagine for modern Western readers dependent on sound systems, such skills have long existed; e.g., a preacher such as George Whitefield could be heard by up to thirty thousand people at a time.²⁸⁹ Peter’s address *Men* is the typical address in Acts (e.g., Acts 1:11, 16; 2:14, 22, 29, 37), but as in 1:16 and 17:22

²⁸⁵ Bailey, *Poet*, 67.
²⁸⁶ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.47.1; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.64.142; *Rosc. Amer.* 1.1; 22.60; Plutarch, *Cic.* 16.3; *Coriol.* 16.2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.29; Pliny, *Ep.* 9.13.18; 1 Cor 14:30. Contrast rabbis, e.g., Luke 4:20.
²⁸⁷ Cf. *Ab. R. Nat.* 38A; *b. Pesah.* 26a; Mark 12:35; Luke 19:47; 20:1; 21:37.
²⁸⁸ See Menander Rhetor 1.3, 365.27–29.
²⁸⁹ M. A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 93.

(where NRSV renders it differently) the audience could include women (see 1:14; 17:34). This was simply the standard rhetorical convention;²⁹⁰ no one will suppose that Peter welcomes all Jerusalemites in his audience but only *men* from the rest of Judea!

As here, challenge (2:13) and riposte (2:15) were common in ancient public speech.²⁹¹ Although speakers often scored points with their audience at their adversaries' expense,²⁹² Peter instead deflects the mockery with a potentially humorous response that does not shame the hecklers, whom he apparently wishes to win over. Peter is not timid, however (cf. 4:13); he simply has a more serious matter in mind for explicit denunciation (2:23).

At 9 a.m. (2:15),²⁹³ a few hours after the morning offering at sunrise, the temple courts would be teeming with people. Banquets could begin in the late afternoon,²⁹⁴ but evening banquets sometimes lasted into the night (Rom 13:12–13; 1 Thess 5:7).²⁹⁵ Even gentiles could subject all-night revels to ridicule or criticism,²⁹⁶ especially if the party was too smashed to get up the next morning.²⁹⁷ But though some condemned late-night partying, it was considered better (and far more common) than partying during the day (2 Pet 2:13), which invited severe ridicule.²⁹⁸

Speakers often took the *exordium's* subject from the nature of the case before them, and used it to attract hearers' attention, inform them, and secure their favor.²⁹⁹ Peter argues that the disciples' inspired praise in other languages (2:4) represents the promised eschatological prophetic gift

²⁹⁰ See, e.g., Dio Chrysostom 31.8; 34.37; 35.1; 38.1, 5, 21, 30; 40.1; 44.1; 45.1; 46.1, 5; 50.1; scores of other sources in Keener, *Acts*, 1:868–69.

²⁹¹ Cf., e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.5–6; B. J. Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 141; D. A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 29–31.

²⁹² E.g., Xenophon, *Cyr.* 2.2.16; Cicero, *De or.* 2.58.236; *Fin.* 4.26.73; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 11.4.

²⁹³ Days and nights were rounded to quarters, hence the most common hour designations in Luke-Acts are the third hour (Acts 23:23); the sixth hour (Luke 23:44; Acts 10:9); and the ninth hour (Luke 23:44; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30).

²⁹⁴ Martial, *Epig.* 4.8; those maligned as particularly decadent might start earlier (Horace, *Sat.* 2.8; Stambaugh, *City*, 200–1).

²⁹⁵ E.g., Alciphron, *Paras.* 10 (Stemphylochaeron to Trapezocharon), 3.46, ¶2; Statius, *Silv.* 2.4.6; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 95.21; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.37; see further Stambaugh, *City*, 201.

²⁹⁶ E.g., Seneca, *Controv.* 2.1.15; Philo, *Cher.* 92–93; Suetonius, *Jul.* 52.1; *Tib.* 42.1; *Tit.* 7.1.

²⁹⁷ Lucian, *Hermot.* 11; cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 23.5; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 83.14.

²⁹⁸ See Eccl 10:16; Isa 5:11; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 12; Seneca, *Controv.* 2.6.9; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.13; Lucian, *Parl. G.* 4; *m. Abot* 3:10.

²⁹⁹ L. Calboli Montefusco, "Exordium," *BNP* 5:272–73.

(2:17–18). This being the case, the eschatological time has arrived (2:17), the time of salvation in which this gift is available to all who call on the Lord's name (2:21, 38). Peter argues midrashically that the "Lord's" name on which they must call (2:21) is Jesus (2:24–36, esp. 38).

Just as Jesus's quotation of Isaiah concerning Spirit and mission was programmatic for Luke's first volume (Luke 4:18–19; and remains relevant for the second), Peter's quotation from Joel concerning Spirit and mission (Acts 2:17–21) becomes programmatic for the second. God prophetically empowers his people in Acts. Commentators often compare Peter's *this is what was spoken* with an ancient Jewish interpretive approach: "This [in the text] is that [today]." ³⁰⁰ The approach is much more common in Luke's Petrine sermons than in, say, Paul; not distinctively Lukan, it could reflect Luke's knowledge of early apostolic preaching. ³⁰¹

Peter quotes an eschatological restoration text, Joel 2:28–32, which could be among the passages that Luke indicates that Jesus taught his disciples (Luke 24:44–45). Ancient speakers displayed their knowledge with numerous quotations and allusions; Jewish teachers cited Scripture. But they regularly paraphrased wording as needed to suit the present application. ³⁰² Peter's additions to Joel's text emphasize that what is occurring fulfills the eschatological promise of prophetic empowerment hence that the time of eschatological fulfillment has arrived. I italicize to note changes (my translation):

³⁰⁰ In the Dead Sea Scrolls, this is *pesher*, an eschatological application to the present (allowing for a historical meaning, as in 1QpHab 2.3–4, but noting a special meaning for their final generation, 2.5–6); cf. Peter's "last days." Nevertheless, midrash also applied texts to the present (A. G. Wright, "The Literary Genre Midrash," *CBQ* 28 (2, 1966): 105–38 [133–34]); later rabbis applied many prophetic promises specifically to the messianic era (cf. comment on Acts 3:18, 24). Even pagan writers could use a "this was that" sort of statement to explain the fulfillment of an obscure prophecy (Virgil, *Aen.* 7.128).

³⁰¹ Cf. R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 30–31, 100–1, 105. Paul does, however, read christocentrically; see, e.g., J. R. Wagner, "Paul and Scripture," pages 154–71 in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (ed. S. Westerholm; Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 168.

³⁰² See Cicero, *Brut.* 17.68–69; Hermogenes, *Method* 30.447; 1QpHab 12.1–10; 5.8–12; L. H. Silberman, "Unriddling the Riddle: A Study in the Structure and Language of the Habakkuk Pesher," *RevQ* 3 (1961–62): 323–64; esp. C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture* (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 290–91, 305–6, 322–23, 334–37.

Joel 3:1–5 LXX (2:28–32 ET)	Acts 2:17–21, 39
3:1: and it will be that <i>after these things</i> I will <i>also</i> pour forth from my Spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your elders will dream dreams and your young men will see visions	2:17: and it will be that <i>in the last days</i> , ³⁰³ <i>says God</i> , ³⁰⁴ I will pour forth from my Spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your young men will see visions and your elders will dream dreams [<i>clauses reversed</i>]
3:2: And in those days I will pour forth from my Spirit on <i>the</i> male and female slaves	2:18: And in those days I will pour forth from my Spirit on <i>my</i> male and female slaves, ³⁰⁵ <i>and they will prophesy</i> ³⁰⁶
3:3: And I will grant wonders in the heaven and on the earth: blood and fire and smoky vapor	2:19: and I will grant wonders in the heaven <i>above</i> and <i>signs</i> on the earth <i>below</i> : ³⁰⁷ blood and fire and smoky vapor
3:4: the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and obvious day of the Lord comes!	2:20: the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and obvious day of the Lord comes!
3:5: and it will be that everyone who calls on the Lord's name will be saved	2:21: and it will be that everyone who calls on the Lord's name will be saved
. . . and good news will be announced to those whom the Lord has called	2:39: to as many as the Lord our God will call

Peter's most significant changes: (1) highlight Joel's emphasis on the gift's eschatological character, by *the last days* (2:17); (2) reinforce Joel's on the prophetic character of the gift, by adding, *and they shall prophesy* (2:18); (3) an ethnically universalized application of *all flesh* (2:17) in Luke's later context (see 2:39); (4) an emphasis on the present fulfillment (not in Joel), by linking the earthly "signs" (2:19) with Jesus's ministry in 2:22. Although Luke's actual audience might not catch all the changes, his ideal target audience might.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Luke reinforces the eschatological nature of the gift already indicated by Joel's context (Joel 3:1 [LXX 4:1]).

³⁰⁴ Luke or his source add, "says God," to clarify the speaker, but perhaps also so Luke can "specify the promise as that of the Father (cf. Luke 24:29; Acts 1.4)" (Turner, *Power*, 270).

³⁰⁵ Joel highlights the class distinction; Luke emphasizes that all recipients of God's Spirit (2:38–39) will be his servants, like the prophets. The adaptation also weaves in other biblical language (cf. C. M. Blumhofer, "Luke's Alteration of Joel 3.1–5 in Acts 2.17–21," *NTS* 62 [4, 2016]: 499–516).

³⁰⁶ Luke hereby underlines the emphasis on prophecy already in Joel (Menzies, *Development*, 221, 224).

³⁰⁷ The addition of "signs" allows for Luke's application to Jesus's ministry in 2:22.

³⁰⁸ Joel's context in the Greek version (Joel 3:5 LXX [2:32 ET]) also employs a term for "preaching good news" that Luke uses twenty-five times in his work, but it is not in the Hebrew text and Luke omits it in the quotation.

Phrases such as “last days” indicate the eschatological period;³⁰⁹ early Christians consistently viewed this time as their own.³¹⁰ By opening with “in the last days,” Peter tightens the connection with “in those days” in 2:18, without undermining the chiasm in 2:17–18.

A I will pour out my Spirit (2:17b)

B On both genders (2:17c)

C On all ages (2:17d)

B' On both genders (2:18a)

A' I will pour out my Spirit (2:18b)

In line with Joel and other biblical prophets, the Spirit's activity identifies the eschatological people of God.³¹¹ The prophetic activity here encompasses visions and dreams (2:17d) and prophesying more generally (2:17c, 2:18b, the latter being an addition to reinforce the point). Prophetic speech includes prophecy proper (e.g., 11:27; 13:1; 21:9, 11), yet in the most general sense is proclaiming the “word of the Lord,” which in Acts includes the inspired gospel (e.g., 8:25; 12:24; 13:49). For Luke, this empowerment enables especially “witness” to all nations (1:8). The inspired speech in other languages (2:4) offers a particularly apt illustration of the Spirit's empowerment to testify across cultural barriers.

Prophetism was always active in biblical history (3:18, 21, 24); those who receive the message are “children of the prophets” as well as of Abraham (cf. 3:25). Luke assumes that this activity, like Jesus reigning at the Father's right hand (2:34–35), continues in his day; God had not poured the Spirit out just to pour the Spirit back again, nor inaugurated the “last days,” the messianic era, only to retract them. This functioned as an irrefutable apologetic that the messianic era had dawned, hence that the promised Messiah had already come.³¹²

³⁰⁹ See, e.g., Isa 2:2; Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1; cf. 1QS^a 1.1; 4Q162 2.1; 4Q163 f23.2.10; 11Q13 2.4; 1 En. 108:1; 4 Ezra 7:84, 95; 10:59.

³¹⁰ See 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:2; Jms 5:3; 1 Pet 1:20; 2 Pet 3:3; Ignatius, *Eph.* 11.1; 2 *Clem.* 14.2; Irenaeus, *Her.* 3.12.1; 3.18.1. Many early Christians struggled with overrealized eschatology, undoubtedly partly due to Greek influence (e.g., 1 Cor 15:12; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Tim 2:18); but the very affirmation that the Christ had come comprised the basis for a realized eschatology alongside a future one.

³¹¹ As widely in early Christianity, e.g., Rom 8:9, 14–17; Gal 3:2–5, 14; 4:29; Eph 4:30; 1 John 3:24; 4:13; 5:7; cf. Justin, *Dial.* 82.

³¹² Cf., e.g., H. J. Cadbury, “Acts and Eschatology,” pages 300–311 in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 300; R. Williams, *Acts*, 43; G. W. H. Lampe, “‘Grievous Wolves’ (Acts 20:29),” pages 253–68 in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 255–56; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 345.

The gift of the Spirit transcends all human barriers, undoubtedly more than Peter himself envisions at this point in the narrative (Acts 10:28). Luke understands *all flesh* (2:17) as referring to people from all nations. He recalls his other use of the phrase, an Isaian programmatic quote: through John's mission, "all flesh" would see God's salvation (Luke 3:6; Isa 40:5);³¹³ he also revisits his quotation from Joel in Acts 2:39, which Luke applies to all people (see comment there). *All flesh* is ethnically universal, as also in the *everyone* (the same Greek term for *all*) in 2:21 and *all* in 2:39. Joel 2:29's *male and female slaves* probably also suggests gentiles (see Lev 25:44; Isa 14:2).

Since OT promises of the Spirit being poured out referred to Israel's restoration, the Spirit identifying gentiles as among God's eschatological people would astonish most Judeans.³¹⁴ "Pouring" is a fluid image consistent with other fluid images concerning the Spirit such as baptism (1:5), washing (1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5), and the like, somewhat analogous to wind-related images.³¹⁵

The passage's universality transcends ethnic universality alone. Joel's eschatological outpouring of the Spirit included women as well as men prophesying, reinforcing the point twice (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:17–18). Although some women prophesied in the Old Testament (Exod 15:20; Judg 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; Isa 8:3), Luke more explicitly balances women and men in this gift (Luke 2:25–27, 36; Acts 21:9).³¹⁶ In this period, respectable women did not typically speak publicly to groups including men.³¹⁷ Most people made exceptions for inspired speech, however, since in those cases a deity was speaking!³¹⁸

³¹³ The LXX helpfully adds seeing God's "salvation" to seeing his glory; Luke may prefigure this LXX addition in Luke 2:30. Luke extends Isaiah's quotation beyond Mark's use of Isa 40:3 (Mark 1:3).

³¹⁴ For association of the prophets with loyalty to Israel, see, e.g., *Mek. Pisha* 1.105–6; J. Bowman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Talmud and Midrash," *EvQ* 22 (3, 1958): 205–20 (205–20, esp. 213–15); N. N. Glatzer, "A Study of the Talmudic Interpretation of Prophecy," *RR* 10 (2, 1946): 115–37 (130–36). On different visions for gentiles in the future, see Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 52–74.

³¹⁵ Cf. C. S. Keener, "Spirit, Holy Spirit, Advocate, Breath, Wind," pages 484–96 in *The Westminster Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (ed. D. E. Gowan; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 484–85, 489.

³¹⁶ Thus, e.g., Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 5, emphasizes that the gift is now available to both genders, in contrast to the limitations of the OT era. Gentiles also recognized prophetesses, e.g., Strabo 14.1.34; Seneca, *Tro.* 34–37; Tacitus, *Germ.* 8.

³¹⁷ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 1.356–61; Sophocles, *Ajax* 293; Livy 34.4.18; Valerius Maximus 3.8.6; 8.3.2; Plutarch, *Bride* 32, *Mor.* 142D; Hermogenes, *Method* 21.436–37; Heliodorus, *Eth.* 1.21.

³¹⁸ Cf. J. G. Sigountos and M. Shank, "Public Roles for Women in the Pauline Church: A Reappraisal of the Evidence," *JETS* 26 (3, 1983): 283–95; sacrificial speech in T. Paige, "The

Bridging Horizons: Prophesying Daughters (Acts 2:17–18)

Peter did not yet recognize the ethnic implications of Joel's prophecy (10:28) and probably did not recognize its gender implications either. Nevertheless, Joel effectively declared that God's gift of the Spirit would abolish all distinctions in terms of inspired speaking for God. No longer would this activity be limited to a few prophets, mostly free males; it would characterize all of God's true people.

Paul certainly expected women to engage in prophetic gifts (1 Cor 11:5). Paul makes egalitarian statements (1 Cor 7:2–4, 12–16; 11:5, 11–12; Gal 3:28;³¹⁹ Eph 5:21) and functions in some respects as an egalitarian with women colleagues (Rom 16:1–7, 16; Phil 4:2–3; Col 4:15), but does not usually directly confront the social hierarchy (1 Cor 11:3–16; 14:34–35; Eph 5:22). Luke's narrative confirmation of women prophesying (21:9; Luke 2:36) suggests that, once the traditional social constraints were removed, egalitarian ministry would follow.

Some church fathers recognized from Acts that spiritual gifts (like tongues) were given to women as well,³²⁰ and many subsequent readers have long drawn from the Joel quotation a justification for women's ministry. In the nineteenth century, these included African Methodist Episcopal evangelist Julia A. J. Foote, Methodist evangelist Phoebe Palmer, Salvation Army cofounder Catherine Booth, and Baptist preacher A. J. Gordon, to name a few.³²¹ Women were often taking on roles in some periods of religious revival.³²² Early Holiness and Pentecostal churches that

Social Matrix of Women's Speech at Corinth: The Context and Meaning of the Command to Silence in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36," *BBR* 12 (2, 2002): 217–42 (231–33).

³¹⁹ Gal 3:28 may even evoke Joel 2:28–29 (see C. S. Keener, *Galatians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017], 168).

³²⁰ E.g., Theodoret of Cyr, *Comm. 1 Cor.* 245.

³²¹ See J. C. Anderson, "Reading Tabitha: A Feminist Reception History," pages 108–44 in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (ed. E. V. McKnight and E. S. Malbon; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994); J. Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 160; J. M. Everts and R. S. Baird, "Phoebe Palmer and Her Pentecostal Protégées: Acts 2.17–18 and Pentecostal Woman Ministers," pages 146–59 in Alexander, May, and Reid, *Trajectories*, 147, 151.

³²² Cf. N. A. Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984); K. Roxburgh, "The Impact of the Welsh Revival on Baptist Churches in Scotland," pages 185–207 in *Revival, Renewal, and the Holy Spirit* (ed. D. W. Roberts; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 191–92, 203–4; H. D. Curtis, "The Global Character of Nineteenth-Century Divine Healing," pages 29–45 in C. G. Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, 40.

drew heavily on Acts 2 also advanced an early case for this,³²³ and have had a significant influence on promoting ministries of women in many parts of the world.³²⁴ Although barriers remain in many churches, in many Christian churches today women are doing ministry in ways rarely considered in earlier centuries. ****

All flesh includes not only both *sons and daughters* (Acts 2:17c, 18a) but also *young* and *old* (2:17d).³²⁵ Luke illustrates both principles: Simeon and Anna are aged (Luke 2:26, 36–37), but Philip’s prophesying daughters, mentioned in the same context as the older prophet Agabus, are probably teenagers (Acts 21:9). Joel’s wording also challenged the class barrier (mentioning *the slaves*, Joel 2:29); Luke adapts this wording to *my slaves*, limiting the relevant sphere of *all flesh* to believers³²⁶ and making all believers, regardless of external status, God’s agents; God’s prophets were often called his servants in Scripture.³²⁷

Slaves were socially subordinate to their holders, but some slaves of powerful persons wielded more authority than many free persons,³²⁸ biblical prophets even issued God’s orders to kings (e.g., 1 Kgs 20:22;

³²³ J. E. Powers, “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy’: Pentecostal Hermeneutics and the Empowerment of Women,” pages 313–37 in *Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (ed. M. W. Dempster, B. D. Klaus, and D. Petersen; Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 318; Wacker, *Heaven*, 158–65 (but for countervailing tendencies, 165–76); K. E. Alexander, “Matters of Conscience, Matters of Unity, Matters of Orthodoxy: Trinity and Water Baptism in Early Pentecostal Theology and Practice,” *JPT* 17 (1, 2008): 48–69, here 59 (with limitations); G. B. McGee, *Miracles, Missions, & American Pentecostalism* (AmSocMissS 45; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 135 (on 136–37 noting the decline in the next generation).

³²⁴ Powers, “Daughters,” 313; E. Alexander and A. Yong, eds. *Philip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership* (PrTMS 104; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009); A. T. Pothen, “Indigenous Cross-Cultural Missions in India and Their Contribution to Church Growth: With Special Emphasis on Pentecostal-Charismatic Missions” (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990), 191–92, 255; J. Ma, “Asian Women and Pentecostal Ministry,” pages 129–46 in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (ed. A. Anderson and E. Tang; Oxford: Regnum, 2005), 136–42; O. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 161–62; G. Espinosa, “Latino Pentecostal Healing in the North American Borderlands,” pages 129–49 in C. G. Brown, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, 140; Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 208–9.

³²⁵ Cf. both older OT prophets (Deut 34:7; 1 Kgs 14:4–6) and, more extraordinarily, younger ones (1 Sam 2:11, 18, 26; 3:4–19; Jer 1:6–7).

³²⁶ So also F. Philip, *The Origins of Pauline Pneumatology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 213.

³²⁷ E.g., 2 Kgs 9:7, 36; 10:10; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Dan 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6; 1QS 1:3; 4Q166 2:5; 4 Ezra 1:32; 2:1.

³²⁸ See, e.g., D. B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 47–49.

2 Kgs 9:6).³²⁹ As Simeon is an earlier Lukan model of a male slave of God (*doulos*; Luke 2:29) moved by God's Spirit (2:25–27), so is Mary of a woman slave (*doulê*; 1:38, 48) moved by God's Spirit (1:35).³³⁰

A Closer Look: The Revival of Prophecy

Gentiles usually heeded oracles and prophecies;³³¹ Jews trusted prophets of the true God as more authoritative than gentile prophets (cf. 1 Cor 12:2).³³² Some Jewish circles believed that the Spirit had been suppressed (at least in the sense of inspiring full prophets).³³³ For example, Josephus ends the succession of prophets with the last books of the OT,³³⁴ and no longer explicitly associates contemporary prophecy with God's Spirit.³³⁵ Prophecy continued, but he applied the *title* "prophet" in his own day only to "false prophets."³³⁶ Later rabbis believed that the Spirit had been quenched by their time, and that the Spirit would rest on only the rarest of individuals, often none in a given generation.³³⁷

³²⁹ Cf. *Sipre Deut.* 62.1.1–2; 70.1.3; 157.1.1; J. S. Holladay, "Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel," *HTR* 63 (Jan. 1970): 29–51 (31–34).

³³⁰ The title "slaves" applies to all believers, though especially those with the greatest responsibilities (Luke 12:37, 43–48; 17:7–10; 19:13, 15, 17; 20:10–11; cf. Luke 14:17, 21–23; Acts 16:17).

³³¹ See, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.31.1; Lucan, *C.W.* 5.165–93; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 10.23–27; 13.9; Plutarch, *Dial. L.* 16, *Mor.* 759B; J. E. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Response and Operations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Forbes, *Prophecy*, 288–308.

³³² E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 343.6.1; 357.18.2. Some believed that in an emergency an Israelite prophet could even temporarily suspend the Torah (*Sipre Deut.* 175.1.3); but cf. limits in *t. Sanh.* 14:13; *Sipra Behuqotai* pq. 13.277.1.12.

³³³ See 1 Macc 4:45–46; 9:27; 14:41; Sir 36:14–16; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.41; 4 *Ezra* 12:42; 2 *Bar.* 85:3; *t. Sotah* 12:5; 13:3. See fuller discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 1:890–94.

³³⁴ *Ag. Ap.* 1.41. For more on the cessation of prophets in Josephus, see S. Z. Leiman, "Josephus and the Canon of the Bible," pages 50–58 in *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (ed. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

³³⁵ E. Best, "The Use and Non-use of Pneuma by Josephus," *NovT* 3 (3, 1959): 218–25 (222–25); Isaacs, *Spirit*, 49, 51 (noting also Philo).

³³⁶ See D. E. Aune, "The Use of προφήτης in Josephus," *JBL* 101 (3, 1982): 419–21; cf. also D. Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1979), 26, 28. Qumran texts may contrast true inspiration by the Spirit with false prophets (CD 6.1; 4Q266 frg. 3.ii.9; 4Q267 frg. 2.6; 4Q269 frg. 4.i.2; 6Q15 frg. 3.4), as also in *Herm.* 43.2, 7, 12.

³³⁷ See, e.g., *m. Sotah* 9:15; *t. Sotah* 13:3; *Mek. Beshallah* 7.135ff.; *Sipre Deut.* 173.1.3. For the Spirit or prophecy being linked to Torah obedience, see *Mek. Pisha* 1.58–113, 137–41; *Sipre Deut.* 176.1.1; 176.2.2; W. D. Davies, "Reflections on the Spirit in the Mekilta: A Suggestion," *JANESCU* 5 (1973): 95–105 (98); E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 1:577–78. More like early Christians, some Jewish circles recognized that the Spirit was God's gift (Wis 9:17;

Outside elite circles, however, most allowed that prophecy on some (subcanonical) level continued.³³⁸ Qumran sectarians even emphasized the Spirit's activity among themselves, though probably especially because they believed that they lived at the threshold of the eschatological era.³³⁹

The pervasiveness and anticipation of charismatic experience in the early Christian movement (cf. 1 Cor 14:26, 29–31; 1 Thess 5:20), however, was highly unusual. The OT associates the Spirit especially with prophets and leaders. In the NT era, though, all God's people have the Spirit and are potentially prophetic in various ways (Acts 2:17–18; cf. 1 Cor 14:5, 31).

Luke often connects the Spirit with prophecy and prophetic types of activity, as here.³⁴⁰ Jesus appears as a Spirit-anointed (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38) prophet (Luke 4:24; 13:33; 24:19; Acts 3:22–23; 7:37), and now the church is empowered prophetically as well (Acts 2:17–18). In view of the parallels with Elijah and Elisha in 1:8–11 (cf. Luke 4:25–27), this could include at times the sorts of signs associated with those prophets (see comment on “power” at Acts 1:8). This fits the ministry of apostles (2:43; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12) and some others in Acts (6:8; 8:6, 13). Acts 2:17 also suggests that visions and dreams remained part of the church's experience; cf. 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17–19; 26:19; Luke 1:22.³⁴¹

As the most important of the Spirit's charismata, prophecy was central for the expansion of the church; for a Jewish audience, it constituted decisive evidence that God was fulfilling his eschatological promises.³⁴²

cf. 1QHa 8.29; 15.9; 4Q504 fi–2Rv15; the Teacher in 4Q427 f8ii.17; eschatologically, *Sib. Or.* 4.46).

³³⁸ E.g., Josephus, *War* 1.78–80; 2.159; 6.300–9; Isaacs, *Spirit*, 48; Aune, *Prophecy*, 104; R. Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7–111. Even some rabbis allowed for mystical experiences (*t. Hag.* 2:3–4).

³³⁹ Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 29–44; M.-A. Chevallier, “Le souffle de Dieu dans le judaïsme, aux abords de l'ère chrétienne,” *FoiVie* 80 (1, 1981): 33–46 (38–41).

³⁴⁰ See Menzies, *Development*, especially 205–77 (on Acts).

³⁴¹ Luke prefers the language of “visions,” even for those that occur at night (16:9; 18:9); for OT precedent, see Gen 46:2; Job 4:13; Dan 7:7, 13; among gentiles, Plutarch, *Alc.* 39.1–2; *Cim.* 18.4; *Demosth.* 29.2; *Sulla* 9.4. Apocalypses specialized in visions (see, e.g., 1 *En.* 72.1–83.1); altered states of consciousness allow for visionary experiences in many cultures (J. J. Pilch, *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles: How the Early Believers Experienced God* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004], esp. 158–59). Luke reports them more often in Acts than in the Gospel, presumably in part because Jesus would not need them (B. J. Koet, “Divine Communication in Luke-Acts,” pages 745–57 in Verheyden, *Unity*, 756–57).

³⁴² Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 236.

In 2:19, Luke adds *signs* to Joel's *portents*, probably to prepare for the description of Jesus's ministry in terms of *deeds of power, wonders and signs* in 2:22. This demonstrates that the eschatological era of the Spirit and salvation had arrived, revealed also by the continuing signs in Acts (2:43; 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12).³⁴³ Additionally and secondarily, Luke may evoke the heavenly darkness at Jesus's death (Luke 23:44–45),³⁴⁴ prefiguring future cosmic signs (21:11, 25–26) some indefinite time after Jerusalem's fall (21:20–23), as well as signs on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2–4), especially the fire (2:3, 19).

Although Luke probably expects a fuller future fulfillment, as noted, ancients were also familiar with some such language in more ordinary settings.³⁴⁵ Joel's *smoky mist* could evoke war language (cf. Joel 2:2, 10; 3:15),³⁴⁶ as often in depictions of battles and armies in Luke's world.³⁴⁷ Although some viewed eclipses simply as purely natural phenomena,³⁴⁸ most people viewed them as portents.³⁴⁹ Such omens frightened both most Jews³⁵⁰ and most gentiles,³⁵¹ sometimes they portended coming political instability.³⁵² In a case of war, of course, combatants had to determine for which side the eclipse portended disaster.³⁵³ But for Jewish people, the darkened sun and moon could signal terrifying eschatological judgment.³⁵⁴

The "day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20) sometimes applies in the prophets to nearer judgments, but these could foreshadow God's ultimate day of

³⁴³ The NRSV's *wonders* in 2:22 is the same Greek term as its *portents* in 2:19.

³⁴⁴ Bede, *Comm. Acts* 2.20; Barclay, "Acts ii.14–40," 198; D. Juel, *Luke-Acts: The Promise of History* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1983), 61.

³⁴⁵ For cosmic catastrophe language used within history, see, e.g., Judg 5:4; Ps 18:4–19; Jer 4:23–28; *Sib. Or.* 3.286–92; 4.57–60; Petronius, *Sat.* 124.

³⁴⁶ Joel has just depicted the day of YHWH (Joel 2:1) as a day of darkness and clouds (2:2), with the sky darkened by the locust invasion (2:10) in the terrible day of YHWH (2:11; cf. Ezek 30:3; Zeph 1:14–15).

³⁴⁷ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 16.374–75; Sallust, *Jug.* 53.1; Virgil, *Aen.* 12.407–8, 463; Livy 42.2.5; Silius Italicus 4.94; Ezek 38:16; 3 Macc 5:48; for clouds of arrows, see, e.g., Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1084; Valerius Flaccus 2.522; Valerius Maximus 3.7.ext.8.

³⁴⁸ E.g., Polybius 9.19.1; Valerius Maximus 8.11.ext.1; Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 7.1.2; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.6.43, 47; 2.7.47; Heracl., *Hom. Prob.* 57.6.

³⁴⁹ Justin, *Epit.* 22.6.1; 33.1.7; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.30.98; 2.31–32.99; cf. darkening at Vesuvius's eruption in Pliny, *Ep.* 6.20.13–17.

³⁵⁰ E.g., *t. Sukkah* 2:5–6.

³⁵¹ E.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 1.6.1; Thucydides 2.28.1; Polybius 29.16.1–3; Diodorus Siculus 20.5.5; Livy 25.7.8; Plutarch, *Caes.* 69.3–4; *Aem. Paul.* 17.5.

³⁵² E.g., *t. Sukkah* 2:6; Suetonius, *Dom.* 16.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.43; 8.23.

³⁵³ Plutarch, *Alex.* 31.4; Arrian, *Alex.* 3.7.6; Quintus Curtius 4.10.2–6.

³⁵⁴ *Sib. Or.* 5.346–49. The sun being darkened expresses judgment in Isa 13:10; Ezek 32:7; Amos 5:18, 20; 8:9; and in Joel (2:2, 10, 31; 3:15).

reckoning.³⁵⁵ Early Christians also spoke of “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10; cf. *Barn.* 15.4) and the day of God (2 Pet 3:12; Rev 16:14), now also with christological implications as the day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16).³⁵⁶

“Salvation” (Acts 2:21) for Luke (2:40, 47; 4:12) includes both the eschatological kingdom for Israel (e.g., Luke 1:69, 71, 77; 2:11; 3:6; Acts 13:23, 26) and present, proleptic, individual, spiritual, and/or physical deliverance in light of the kingdom (e.g., Luke 8:12; 9:24; 13:23; Acts 11:14; 15:11; 16:30–31). This “salvation” is based on the forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77; 3:3; Acts 3:19). Thus salvation is available in the present (2:40, 47; 4:9, 12; 5:31; 7:25; 13:23; 15:11; 28:28) though consummated in the future.

Calling on the Lord’s name especially involves praying to him.³⁵⁷ Peter expounds at length on this line from Joel that he finishes in Acts 2:21. He expounds the line by arguing that the Lord’s name on which they must call in this salvific era is Jesus (2:21, 34, 38). Thus Peter concludes by exhorting them to call on the Lord’s name by baptism in Jesus’s name (2:38). After concluding the argument, he picks up again the last line he had quoted (2:39).³⁵⁸ Cf. Acts 4:12; 22:16.

In Hebrew the Lord’s name in Joel 2:32, as in 2:31, is YHWH; that Jesus assumes the role of YHWH also in pouring out the Spirit (Acts 2:17–18, 33) suggests that Peter recognizes a divine role for Jesus here. That LXX wording does not distinguish the two Lords in Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:34),³⁵⁹ and that most Jews refused to pronounce the divine name in Hebrew (using instead “Lord”),³⁶⁰ facilitates Peter’s connecting the two. The title “the name” became one surrogate for actually repeating the divine name; early Christians transferred this use of the “name” from the Father to

³⁵⁵ Isa 13:6, 9; 58:13; Ezek 13:5; 30:2–3; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5; and most notably in Joel (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 15:12; also “that day” in which God will judge (e.g., Isa 2:11, 17, 20).

³⁵⁶ Cf. Luke 17:22, 26; comment on Acts 3:24.

³⁵⁷ E.g., Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; Ps 79:6 = LXX 78:6; 99:6 = LXX 98:6; *Let. Aris.* 226; *Gen. Rab.* 39:16; *Tg. Joel* on 3:5. Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 47: calling on Jesus’s name shows His deity, since it is unlawful to “call on” the name of “anyone else except God.”

³⁵⁸ Cf., e.g., Dunn, *Acts*, 27; I. H. Marshall, “Acts,” pages 513–606 in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 536, 543; Haenchen, *Acts*, 184 n. 5; Dupont, *Salvation*, 22; Zehnle, *Pentecost Discourse*, 34; Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 231–32.

³⁵⁹ See, e.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 3ff.

³⁶⁰ 1QS 6.27–7.1; 4Q462, fi.7; Sir 23:9–10; *Sib. Or.* 3.17–19; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.276; *CJF* 2:69–70, §821.

Jesus,³⁶¹ and some scholars think the frequent early Jewish Christian “name of Jesus” formula reflects this usage.³⁶²

“Lord” was a frequent title for pagan deities, but for the earliest Jewish church it was especially a divine title in the Septuagint. For Luke, both God the Father (Acts 2:20, 39; 3:19–20, 22; 4:25–26, 29) and the exalted Christ are “Lord” (1:21; 2:36; 4:33; 5:14; 9:1; Rom 10:9–13; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:9–11). Jesus is the object of faith (Acts 3:16) and prayer (7:59) and is the world’s judge (10:42; 17:31). Contrary to a conventional academic view of Christology’s evolution, the most Jewish major NT books (Matthew, John, and Revelation) are most overt in affirming Jesus’s deity. Certainly from an early period Aramaic-speaking Christians were invoking Jesus as “Lord,” inviting his return (1 Cor 16:22). Moreover, the application of Septuagintal language for God to Jesus historically must have begun within two decades of the resurrection (Rom 10:9–13; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:10).³⁶³

2:22–36: THE RISEN LORD

Speakers often invited hearers to listen or keep listening (2:22).³⁶⁴ Peter’s opening mention of Jesus sets the tone for what follows.³⁶⁵ That signs and wonders provide a primary attestation to Jesus is a major emphasis in Luke-Acts (cf. the summaries in Luke 7:22; Acts 10:38; suggested in Luke 4:18).³⁶⁶ Because Luke is here expounding the Joel quotation, he views these signs as proofs that the eschatological, messianic era has arrived in part (2:19). The pairing of signs and wonders (Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12) in early Christian texts (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4),

³⁶¹ See discussion in R. N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM, 1970), 43–45.

³⁶² R. N. Longenecker, “Some Distinctive Early Christological Motifs,” *NTS* 14 (4, 1968): 529–45 (533–36). On “Jesus-devotion” in Luke-Acts, see L. W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 160–62; on Luke predicating analogous claims about Jesus and God, see R. F. O’Toole, *Luke’s Presentation of Jesus: A Christology* (SubBi 25; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2004), passim.

³⁶³ Divine language from the OT appears in the parousia imagery of 1 Thess, probably the earliest extant Christian document; cf. T. F. Glasson, *The Second Advent: The Origin of the New Testament Doctrine* (3rd rev. ed.; London: Epworth, 1963), 161–83; J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1979), 140.

³⁶⁴ E.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.5.10.

³⁶⁵ When transitioning to a new section of a speech, orators often tried to signal their new topic explicitly (Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 372.14–18).

³⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., P. J. Achtemeier, “The Lucan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch,” *JBL* 94 (4, 1975): 547–62.

probably especially evokes the OT story of Moses and the exodus, where the language is most prevalent. Its recurrence here suggests events of salvation-historical significance, and, as in the rest of Acts, wherever new ground is being broken for the kingdom.

One would not expect Diaspora Jewish visitors or even Jerusalemites to be familiar with Jesus's signs as Galileans were, but Luke assumes that word spread widely about Jesus's passion (Luke 24:18; Acts 26:23, 26) and his miracles (Luke 9:6–9; 23:8). As often in argumentation, Peter appeals to the audience's own knowledge of the veracity of his statement (cf. Acts 10:37; 20:18, 34; 26:26).³⁶⁷

Jesus's Death and God's Plan (Acts 2:23)

Jesus's death was God's plan (Acts 2:23). Most Jews recognized God's sovereignty,³⁶⁸ although some differences in detail existed among them.³⁶⁹ God's will and purposes are a recurrent theme in Luke-Acts, especially in the speeches of Acts.³⁷⁰ Ancient writers, including historians, often used oracles, prophecies, fortune, or the plan of deities to lay out their plot.³⁷¹ For gentiles, Fate was inescapable; for Jews, God's plan would be accomplished even in human efforts to subvert it.³⁷² Luke uses fulfilled prophecies to demonstrate God's plan (see e.g., 9:15–16; 10:15; 11:28; 13:2; 18:10; 19:21;

³⁶⁷ E.g., Aeschines, *Embassy* 44, 56; Matt 26:65; 1 Thess 2:1.

³⁶⁸ E.g., *Let. Aris.* 17, 195, 201, 210, 215, 227, 230–31, 237–39, 243–46, 251–52, 255–56, 266–78, 282, 287, 290; *Sib. Or.* 1.304; 3.571–72; 5.227, 324; Wis 7:15–16; 19:4; 3 Macc 4:21; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.277–78; *T. Mos.* 12:4. For Philo, cf. H. A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2 vols.; 4th rev. ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1:180; G. E. Sterling, ed., *The Ancestral Philosophy: Hellenistic Philosophy in Second Temple Judaism: Essays of David Winston* (BJS 331; Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2001), 135–50.

³⁶⁹ Elaborated by Josephus to correspond to philosophic schools; Josephus, *War* 2.162–65; *Ant.* 13.171–73; 18.13. Against Josephus, Essenes' emphasis on predestination (cf. 1QS 11.9–10; 1QM 1.5; 1 En. 108:11–14) probably did not negate human responsibility; see G. R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls: The Problem and a Solution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 558–62; R. E. Brown, *New Testament Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 151–54. Soards, *Speeches*, 184–89.

³⁷¹ Squires, *Plan*, 15–52, 121–37; F. W. Walbank, "Fortune (*tychē*) in Polybius," pages 349–55 in Marincola, *Companion*, 350–54; Rothschild, *Rhetoric*, 97, 142–84; D. Peterson, "The Motif of Fulfilment and the Purpose of Luke-Acts," pages 83–104 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*; cf., e.g., Polybius 1.4.1–2; 1.58, 62; Diodorus Siculus 1.1.3; 31.4.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.21.1.

³⁷² E.g., Polybius 2.35.5; Diodorus Siculus 15.74.3–4; Valerius Maximus 1.8 ext. 8–9; Velleius Paterculus 2.53.3; 1 Kgs 22:30, 34–35; Josephus, *War* 6.84; *Ant.* 8.409, 419; 18.54; D. Grene, *Greek Political Theory: The Image of Man in Thucydides and Plato* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 75–79; C. T. Begg, "The Death of King Ahab according to Josephus,"

20:23, 25; 21:11; 23:11; 27:24–26; 28:28).³⁷³ Luke's term for *plan* here can refer to God's salvation-historical plan (Luke 7:30; Acts 13:36; 20:27) and specifically to the passion, which God facilitated even through hostile authorities (Acts 3:17–18; 4:27–28; 13:27). Although God uses them for his plan (cf., e.g., Gen 45:5, 8; 50:20), the wicked remain accountable for their own evil intention (cf. Acts 3:14–19; Isa 10:5–7).³⁷⁴

Romans used crucifixion widely, and certainly for political cases such as revolutionaries or treason against the majesty of the emperor.³⁷⁵ This is undoubtedly the basis for Jesus's crucifixion, since he is called "king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38; Mark 15:26; Matt 27:37; Jn 19:19), a charge his followers would hardly dare invent (especially in the reign of Tiberius!), unless they were uniformly suicidal.³⁷⁶ It exemplified the most horrible form of death,³⁷⁷ considered fitting for wayward slaves.³⁷⁸

Emphasizing both God's plan (cf. Acts 4:27) and human responsibility, 2:23 also notes Israel's corporate guilt for Jesus's death, summarizing one aspect of Luke's passion narrative (Luke 22–23; but cf. Acts 3:17). Historically, hostile crowds (Luke 23:13, 18, 21, 23; but cf. 22:2, 6; 23:27) probably consisted more of Judeans than of Galileans, who knew Jesus better; Peter addresses Israelites (Acts 2:22; cf. 7:52) but especially Jerusalemites (2:23, 36; cf. 3:15; 4:10; 13:27). Prophets had long denounced their nation's sins and

Antonianum 64 (2–3, 1989): 225–45. For philosophic, astrological, Jewish, and other approaches to Fate, providence, predestination, and choice, see further Keener, *Acts*, 1:927–38. See Squires, *Plan*, 137–54. Promise-fulfillment is a major theme in Luke-Acts, though not necessarily the major one (C. H. Talbert, "Promise and Fulfillment in Lucan Theology," pages 91–103 in Talbert, ed., *Luke-Acts*).

³⁷⁴ Most hellenistic historians, including Josephus and Luke, temper determinism or fate with free will (Squires, *Plan*, 154–85). Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 9:4; *m. Abot* 3:15; *Sipre Deut.* 312.1.1–2; 319.3.1.

³⁷⁵ Cf. J. Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1959), 213–14; R. E. Brown, *Death*, 968. This is its usual function in Josephus, hence probably in Judea (A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1982], 13; e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.241, 253). On crucifixion, see further M. Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977); J. G. Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (WUNT 327; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

³⁷⁶ With, e.g., Harvey, *History*, 13–14. For centuries Jesus's crucifixion constituted an apologetic problem vis-à-vis the Empire's elite (J. G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* [Tübingen: Mohr, 2000], 50–53, 107–8; cf. Lucian, *Peregr.* 11).

³⁷⁷ Diodorus Siculus 34/35.12.1; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.66.169; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 101.10–12; Lucian, *Fisherman* 2.

³⁷⁸ Terence, *Andr.* 622–24; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.66.169; Valerius Maximus 2.7.12.

recognized corporate responsibility.³⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the leaders are most accountable (Acts 4:10–11; 5:30; Luke 24:20; cf. Acts 3:17; 13:27), as they recognize (Acts 5:28; cf. Luke 20:19).³⁸⁰ *Those outside the law* are the more ignorant gentiles,³⁸¹ also culpable (Acts 4:27) but less so because less knowledgeable (cf. Luke 12:47–48).

Luke understands Jesus's sacrificial death partly in terms of Isa 53 (Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32–33); it also inaugurates a new covenant (Luke 22:20) and purchases the church (Acts 20:28). To argue, as some do, that Luke must have rejected the sort of substitutionary or propitiatory atonement found in some other early Christian circles³⁸² is to argue from silence; to further suggest that Jesus's death lacks salvific significance for Luke is to contradict him.

Luke's emphasis, however, lies especially on the resurrection that gives the cross its divinely informed meaning,³⁸³ and this is where his speech lingers (2:24–36).³⁸⁴ Speeches in Acts presumably reveal some of the resurrection texts implied in Luke 24:44–47. Here Peter argues from Scripture that the risen one is the Lord (Acts 2:25–31, 34–35); eyewitness corroboration that Jesus has risen (2:32–33) thus yields the conclusion that Jesus is the Lord (2:36). The Greek phrase translated *freed him from death* (2:24) echoes the LXX (including Ps 18:4–5), but uses wording, probably from Luke's source, that presupposes knowledge of the Hebrew text.³⁸⁵

³⁷⁹ Denunciations include, e.g., Isa 1:10; Ezek 16; Amos 2:6–3:2; 5:21–27; for responsibility, see, e.g., Deut 21:1–9; 1 Sam 15:2–3; 2 Sam 21:1, 6.

³⁸⁰ The likeliest text of Josephus, *Ant.* 18.64 attributes the charges against Jesus to the local elite (C. A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," pages 443–78 in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* [ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NTTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 466).

³⁸¹ Cf. 3 Macc 6:4, 9, 12–13. Charges of lawlessness, leveled in intra-Jewish polemic (see J. A. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990], 17–28), ironically reverse charges against Stephen (Acts 6:11–14; 7:51–53). For killing *by the hands of* others, cf. 1 Sam 18:25; 2 Sam 12:9; secondhand murder in 1 Kgs 21:19; Quintilian, *Decl.* 305.12; Philostratus, *Hrk.* 31.7; 34.6–7.

³⁸² Cf. various approaches in Rom 3:25; 5:6–10; 8:3; 1 Cor 5:7; 15:3; Heb 2:17; 9:7–26; 10:19–20, 29; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Rev 1:5; 5:9. For concepts of atonement in the milieu, cf., e.g., M. Hengel, *The Atonement* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1981); J. Kim, "The Concept of Atonement in Early Rabbinic Thought and the New Testament Writings," *JGRCJ* 2 (2001–5): 117–45.

³⁸³ See esp. K. L. Anderson, *Raised*, 197–233.

³⁸⁴ For lingering to elaborate and highlight, see Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.4.185–86; R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 53.

³⁸⁵ LXX 2 Sam 22:6; Ps 17:5–6 (18:4–5 ET); Ps 114:3 (116:3 ET); see J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen, Neth.: Van Gorcum, 1954), 170–71; Keener, *Acts*, 1:82–83.

This LXX allusion invites comparison with another psalm addressing deliverance from death (Ps 16:8–11; Acts 2:25–28, 31; cf. 13:35), in turn inviting explanation of the psalmist's language by recourse to another psalm – Ps 110:1 in Acts 2:34–35 (cf. also Ps 132:11 in Acts 2:30). Jewish hearers were accustomed to texts linked through related words; Luke omits an element in the link, possibly present in the exposition in his source.³⁸⁶ If psalms of righteous sufferers applied in principle to Jesus par excellence (see comment on 1:20), so did the vindication they usually promised.³⁸⁷ Although Ps 16 itself could be levitical,³⁸⁸ ancient readers attributed the book as a whole especially to David who authorized them (1 Chron 25:1; 2 Chron 29:25), and some applied prophecies broadly to the messianic era (see comment on Acts 3:19–21, 24).

Perhaps because Luke understands God as continually “present” with Jesus (2:25, 28b), he omits Jesus's cry on the cross, “Why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34), while including a promise of paradise the same day (Luke 23:43).³⁸⁹ Luke's main point could have allowed him to skip Acts 2:26a and 2:28b (Ps 16:9a, 11bc), but Luke does not always like to skip (cf. Luke 3:4–6; Acts 8:32–33; 28:26–27), and joy is a Lukan interest (Luke 1:14, 44, 47, 58; 2:10; 6:23; 10:17, 20; 13:17; 15:5–10, 32; Acts 2:47; 5:41; 8:8, 39; 11:21–23; 13:48, 52; 15:3, 31; 16:34), sometimes associated with the Spirit (Luke 10:21; Acts 13:52) and the resurrection (Luke 24:41, 52).

That God did *not abandon* Jesus to *Hades* (Acts 2:27a) means that he did not leave him dead,³⁹⁰ but also provides a fitting rhetorical contrast with Jesus's exaltation to heaven (2:34; cf. Luke 10:15; Ps 139:8). The following line (not experiencing *corruption*; 2:27b) complements the first by showing that not only the soul but also the body would escape decay.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ “Right hand” appears in Acts 2:25 (Ps 16:8) and 2:34 (Ps 110:1), but *God's* right hand in the fuller context (Ps 16:11); cf. R. N. Longenecker, *Exegesis*, 97; Johnson, *Acts*, 52.

³⁸⁷ Cf. A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (trans. H. Hartwell; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1962), 178; G. A. Knight, *Psalms* (2 vols.; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1982–83), 1:78. Luke's one use of the verb *egkataleipō* (Acts 2:27, 31) might answer to Mark's dramatic use in Mark 15:34, which Luke omits.

³⁸⁸ Compare the portion/lot in Ps 16:2, 5–6 with Deut 10:9; 1 Chr 25:8; libations in 16:4 with Lev 23:37; 1 Chr 29:21.

³⁸⁹ With Haenchen, *Acts*, 181; Barrett, *Acts*, 145; Y. Miura, *David in Luke-Acts: His Portrayal in the Light of Early Judaism* (WUNT 2.232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 153; cf. John 16:32.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Luke 16:23; regularly in LXX, including Wis 16:13; Sir 14:12; 28:21; 48:5; 51:6.

³⁹¹ Cf. the functional distinction between the two in, e.g., 1 En. 102:5; *Let. Aris.* 236; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.203; *LAB* 3:10; *t. Sanh.* 13:2; *Sipre Deut.* 306.28.3. Cf. the soul's immortality in e.g., 1 En. 22:7; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.14, 18; *War* 1.84; 2.154, 163; 7.344–48; 4 *Ezra* 7:78. “Ways

Jesus, Not David, Is the Exalted King (2:29–36)

David, having died and been buried rather than having ascended, fulfills neither Ps 16 (Acts 2:29–31) nor Ps 110 (Acts 2:34–35). Rather, both the apostles and the outpoured Spirit attest that Jesus has risen and ascended to God's right hand (2:32–33); therefore Jesus is both the "Lord" of Ps 110:1 and the "Christ," the ultimate Davidic king.

Ps 16 could apply generically to various deliverances from death, including for David, but when pressed literally had to mean something more.³⁹² Eventually David's body did *experience corruption* (2:27, 29); Jesus, however, was raised before such decay could occur.³⁹³ Someone wanting to apply a passage in a less than face-value way could start by showing that the apparent literal meaning was not fulfilled.³⁹⁴ Ps 16 cannot apply literally to the first David,³⁹⁵ but some texts envisioned an eschatological "David," i.e., the messianic ruler from his line (Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5). The covenant promise was to his line (2 Sam 7:11–16; Ps 89:28–29; 132:11–12).³⁹⁶

Peter points out the obvious: the tomb was in plain view among them, and David had not vacated it. Like Greeks, Jewish people venerated tombs of past heroes.³⁹⁷ David's tomb was near Jerusalem (1 Kgs 2:10; 2 Chr 32:33), and its traditional site, still known after the exile (Neh 3:16), continued to be known in the first century³⁹⁸ (though it has since been lost).³⁹⁹ Since David is buried (Acts 2:29), David is not the one who ascended (2:34).

of life" (Acts 2:28a) could suggest safe as opposed to dangerous behavior (Prov 5:6; 6:23; 10:17; 12:28; 15:24) but also applies to the two-ways tradition (Jer 21:8; Matt 7:14; cf. Luke 13:24).

³⁹² Pharisees and others also looked for resurrection in biblical texts; e.g., 4 Macc 18:18–19; *Sipre Deut.* 329.2.1; *b. Sanh.* 90b; *Pesah.* 68a; *Gen. Rab.* 20:10. One later rabbi opined that all texts imply the resurrection if one has the ingenuity to find it there (G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–30; reprint: New York: Schocken, 1971], 2:383; *Sipre Deut.* 306.28.3).

³⁹³ Later sources suggest that some believed that the soul departed after three days and decomposition started (*m. Yebam.* 16:3).

³⁹⁴ E.g., *y. Ber.* 2:1, §5.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Strauss, *Messiah*, 131–47. Some later sources do try to apply it to David (Miura, *David*, 144–45).

³⁹⁶ See also Isa 9:7; 16:5; Jer 23:5; 33:15, 17, 21–22; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:7–13:1. Some applied Davidic psalms to his line; see *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 27:3.

³⁹⁷ See, e.g., Josephus, *War* 4.531–32; cf. *Ant.* 16.179–82; 20.95. Indeed, tombs of famous persons were, like temples, tourist attractions (Paus. 2.7.2; 8.41.1). Luke himself would be less impressed (Luke 11:44, 48; cf. 8:27).

³⁹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 7.392–94; 13.249; 16.179–83; *War* 1.61; cf. *t. B. Bat.* 1:11; Jerome, *Ep.* 46.

³⁹⁹ See R. Riesner, "Synagogues in Jerusalem," pages 179–211 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 201; B. Pixner, "Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion," *BAR* 16 (3, 1990): 16–35, 60.

Peter emphasizes that David spoke not of himself, but in his role as a prophet (2:30), i.e., as one speaking by the Spirit.⁴⁰⁰ Many shared the assumption that prophets spoke especially of the messianic era (see comment on Acts 3:24). Jewish people agreed that the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture;⁴⁰¹ reaffirming this, however, also underlines how the Spirit is now inspiring Jesus's witnesses (1:8; 2:17–18, 32–33). In 2:30 Peter draws language from Ps 132:11 (which in turn draws on 2 Sam 7:12) about God's royal promise for David's lineage.⁴⁰² Luke's audience is well-prepared for these allusions (Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; 3:31; 20:41–44).

Unlike other seats, traditional thrones had backs and armrests, and often legs ending in carved animal paws;⁴⁰³ Jewish depictions of the heavenly throne, however, exceed earthly parallels.⁴⁰⁴ David's throne (Acts 2:30; Luke 1:32; Ps 132:11) turns out to be the exalted throne at God's right hand, as God's vice-regent (Acts 2:34; cf. 7:49). This redefines Jewish Davidic expectations.⁴⁰⁵ Even a temporary seat at a ruler's right hand was a great honor.⁴⁰⁶ A king's favorite would sit near him,⁴⁰⁷ and exercise the king's authority from there.⁴⁰⁸ Jesus being in God's presence (Acts 2:25, 29) locates him in heaven.

Peter next appeals to two forms of eyewitness: first, the apostolic eyewitnesses' testimony that Jesus rose and ascended (2:32); and second, to the eyewitness recognition of his audience themselves that the eschatological Spirit has been poured out among them (2:33).⁴⁰⁹ Peter's bold claim, "We are witnesses," recurs frequently in the Petrine speeches in Acts (3:15; 5:32;

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. 2 Sam 23:1–2; 2 Chr 29:25. Other Jewish texts expanded the list of prophets (Tob 4:12; Sir 46:1), and some included David among them (11Q5, 27.11; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.166, 222; *Sipre Deut.* 1.1.4).

⁴⁰¹ E.g., 4 *Ezra* 14:22; *Sipra Vayyiqra Dibura Denedabah* par. 1.1.3.3; 5.10.1.1; *Behuqotai* pq. 6.267.2.1; *Sipre Deut.* 355.17.1–3; 356.4.1.

⁴⁰² See also Ps 2:7–9; 89:26–29; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Zech 12:8; and passages above. Others understood Ps 132 and 2 Sam 7 messianically (4QFlor 1.7–13).

⁴⁰³ R. Hurschmann, "Throne: Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *BNP* 14:628–29.

⁴⁰⁴ E.g., 1 *En.* 14:18–20; 2 *En.* 1a.4; 20:3; 22:2; 3 *En.* 33:4; *b. Hag.* 13a.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. C. M. Tuckett, "The Christology of Luke-Acts," pages 133–64 in Verheyden, *Unity*, 162, noting that this royalty would not entail a revolt against the Empire.

⁴⁰⁶ Suetonius, *Nero* 13.2.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Pindar frg. 146 (from scholion on *Il.* 24.100); Sir 12:12; Mark 10:37, 40. This could include the queen (1 Kgs 2:19; Ps 45:9; 1 Esd 4:29–30) or, beside God, Wisdom (*Wis* 9:4).

⁴⁰⁸ Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 37.4–7, *Hymn to Athena*; Eunapius, *Lives* 462; for coregents and their authority, cf. 1 Kgs 1:35–37, 46; Suetonius, *Titus* 6.

⁴⁰⁹ In Lukan idiom, "seeing" and "hearing" appear together regarding signs (Luke 2:20; 7:22; 10:24; Acts 8:6; 22:14) and testimony (Luke 2:20; 7:22; Acts 4:20; 22:15). He might echo Q (cf. Matt 13:15) but perhaps esp. his Isa 6 quotation (Luke 8:10, 18; Acts 28:26–27).

10:39; cf. 4:20; on this motif, see comment on Acts 1:8). At various points in Acts preachers announce Jesus as “this Jesus” (1:11; 2:32, 36; 9:22; 17:3), usually emphatically while citing powerful evidence.⁴¹⁰

Whereas Acts 2:17–18 quotes Joel to show that God pours out the Spirit (cf. 5:32; 15:8), a role filled here by Jesus. In the OT, only God pours out God’s Spirit (Isa 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28–29). Christ is not absent in Acts, but displaying his reign in part through the activity of the Spirit.⁴¹¹

Theologically, the Spirit’s outpouring stems from Christ’s exaltation (Acts 2:33), even though Luke does not identify these moments precisely chronologically, but allows over a week between them (probably because of his historical sources). Christ’s exaltation after the cross (also 5:31) also fits the divine pattern of God exalting those who humble themselves (Luke 1:52; 14:11; 18:14).⁴¹²

Just as David could not speak solely of himself in Ps 16 (Acts 2:29), neither could he speak of himself in Ps 110; in fact, he explicitly speaks instead of his Lord (Acts 2:34).⁴¹³ Although Jewish tradition attributed extrabiblical ascensions to several biblical characters,⁴¹⁴ David was not one of them. It was natural to apply this psalm messianically,⁴¹⁵ but its fairly rare citation in early Jewish sources contrasts with its pervasive and unified use in early Christianity,⁴¹⁶ probably pointing to its origin with Jesus himself (Luke 20:42; Mark 12:36).

⁴¹⁰ Cf. “this Moses” in 7:35–40. Rhetoric could employ repetition to underline a point (cf. G. O. Rowe, “Style,” pages 121–57 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 133–34).

⁴¹¹ Cf. Turner, *Power*, 277–78, 296–97, 305; O. Mainville, “Jésus et l’Esprit dans l’oeuvre de Luc: Éclairage à partir d’Ac 2,33,” *ScEs* 42 (2, 1990): 193–208.

⁴¹² Cf., e.g., Ps 138:6; Isa 2:11–12, 17; 57:15; Ezek 21:26; Sir 11:5–6; *Ab. R. Nat.* 11 A. Some compare here Jewish traditions of Moses ascending to heaven to receive the gift of Torah for Israel (cf., e.g., *Sipre Deut.* 49.2.1).

⁴¹³ Again, first-century audiences would accept the Davidic superscription; a non-Davidic psalmist could call his king “my lord,” but Israel lacked priest-kings before the Maccabees.

⁴¹⁴ E.g., Moses (Zwief, *Ascension*, 64–71) or Ezra (71–74); more defensibly, Enoch (41–51).

⁴¹⁵ Cf. a possible allusion in Ps. Sol. 17:32, 46. Later rabbinic application of Ps 110 to Abraham (e.g., *b. Ned.* 32b; *Gen. Rab.* 46:5) is probably polemic against the exaltation of Melchizedek (cf. Ps 110:4; Gen 14:18–20) in some circles they considered heterodox (cf. 11QMelch; Heb 7:4–10). Later rabbis bristled at the thought of two thrones in heaven and the alleged ditheism of schismatics (*m. Sanh.* 4:5; *Sipre Deut.* 329.1.1; 3 *En.* 16:2–4); early Judaism had many exalted figures (D. L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus* [WUNT 2.106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998], 112–83; C. S. Keener, “Jesus and Parallel Jewish and Greco-Roman Figures,” pages 85–111 in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture* [ed. S. E. Porter and A. W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2013]).

⁴¹⁶ See also Mark 14:62; Acts 7:55–56; Acts 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21; Mark 16:19; 1 *Clem.* 36:5; *Barn.* 12.10.

Both in Luke 20:43 and Acts 2:35, Luke's quotation of Ps 110:1 extends further than does Mark's (Mark 12:44). By emphasizing that the Lord's reign extends *until I make your enemies your footstool*,⁴¹⁷ he emphasizes that Christ is presently reigning, reinforcing the eschatology articulated in Acts 1:6–8 and 2:17–18. If Jesus is already enthroned at the Father's right hand, then he has begun his messianic reign, hence "the messianic age has begun and the messianic blessings have been given."⁴¹⁸

As in Acts 2:36, speakers commonly provided a final summation of their argument.⁴¹⁹ The proclamatory "Let all the house of Israel know" fits such a climax.⁴²⁰ By way of Acts 2:34–35 (Ps 110:1), Peter has shown that Jesus is the "Lord" of Acts 2:21 (Joel 2:32). That *God has made him* means that God has now publicly appointed him to this office, even though this had always been his destiny or identity (Luke 1:32, 35; 2:11, 26; 3:22; 4:41; 9:20; 22:67–69; 24:26, 46; cf. Phil 2:6–11). Only once the ruler was installed did he take his title.⁴²¹ But having emphasized Jesus's exaltation (2:36b, summarizing 2:24–35), Peter concludes by reminding them of their fault in crucifying the promised Messiah (2:36c, returning chiastically to 2:23): *this Jesus whom you crucified*. In Greek, the plural "you" here is emphatic, a peculiarity that will recur in 2:39's promise for all who turn to the Lord.⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ Treading down enemies was a common image (e.g., Isa 25:10; 28:3; 41:25; 63:2–3, 6; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 94.56; R. K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* [SAOC 54; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993], 119–36, esp. 123–24) and the earlier image of enemies being made a footstool (cf. J. H. Hayes, "The Usage of Oracles against Foreign Nations in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 87 (1, 1968): 81–92 [90–91]) remained intelligible in this period (van der Horst, "Parallels to Acts," 57; cf. Quintus Curtius 5.2.15). Scripture elsewhere used the idiom of those under one's feet being subjected (1 Kgs 5:3 [LXX 5:17]; Ps 8:6; 47:4; 18:38 [LXX 8:7; 46:5; 17:39]).

⁴¹⁸ Ladd, *Theology*, 337.

⁴¹⁹ E.g., Aeschines, *Tim.* 196; *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1443b.15–16; 1444b.21–35; 37, 1445b.21–23; Cicero, *Fin.* 5.32.95–96; Polybius 39.8.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Dem.* 32; *Thuc.* 55.

⁴²⁰ Concluding statements sometimes even took the form of exclamations (see Rowe, "Style," 148). "Know therefore" or "see therefore" was natural in argumentation (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.11.39).

⁴²¹ See R. N. Longenecker, *Christology*, 66–73. On ancient messianic understandings, see further Keener, *Acts*, 1:964–70.

⁴²² Tannehill, *Acts*, 36. Speakers recognized the value of a climactic appeal to emotion (e.g., Isaeus, *Menecl.* 47; *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1443b.16–21; Cicero, *Pro P. Quinct.* 30.91–31.99; *Pro C. Rabirius* 17.47; *Sest.* 69.144–47; *Pro Milone* 38.105; R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 62).

2:37–41: RESPONSE AND PROMISE

Conscience-stricken over their corporate failure in rejecting their own graciously God-given king (2:36c), the crowd asks what to do (Acts 2:37), i.e., in order to be saved (the issue raised in 2:21). Peter summons them to repentance (“turning” to God, as in the prophets) and to call on Jesus’s name in a baptism involving such repentance. God’s promise to them, and to all those whom their repentance proleptically foreshadowed, was the Holy Spirit (2:38–39).

The inspired message produces deep emotional conviction (*cut to the heart*, 2:37), which can produce rage (5:33; 7:54), or, as here, desperation. Like the rich ruler in Luke 18:18 who asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, others in Luke-Acts ask what they must do to be saved (Luke 3:10; Acts 16:30; cf. 22:10), as here (2:37). The answers are complementary: faith in Jesus as Lord (Acts 16:31), expressed in turning to God in Jesus’s name (2:38), expressed in sacrificing whatever necessary to meet others’ needs (Luke 3:11; 18:22), as the new believers in fact do (Acts 2:44–45).

Just as John, the forerunner, preached a baptism symbolizing or effecting repentance (Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4), so now does Peter.⁴²³ In 2:38 and 3:19, Peter preaches repentance like the OT prophets calling Israel to turn to the Lord (see Acts 3:19; cf. 5:31; 8:22).⁴²⁴ Jewish tradition valued repentance,⁴²⁵ including corporately for Israel.⁴²⁶ Proselytes also “repented,” turning from their former gentile way of life.⁴²⁷ In Luke-Acts “repentance” is both the content (Luke 3:3, 8; 5:32; 13:3, 5; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20; cf. 8:22) and the appropriate response (Luke 10:13; 11:32; 15:7, 10; 16:30–31; Acts 11:18) to kingdom preaching. Embracing God’s reign means accepting a new king.

⁴²³ On repentance, see G. D. Nave, *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (SBLABib 4; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2002); R. C. Tannehill, *The Shape of Luke’s Story: Essays on Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2005), 84–101; L. Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 109–12.

⁴²⁴ Isa 55:7; Jer 3:12, 14, 22; 4:1; 25:5; 26:3; Ezek 14:6; 18:21, 23, 30; Hos 14:1; Joel 2:12–13; Mal 3:7; esp. Zech 1:3–4; H. F. Bayer, “The Preaching of Peter in Acts,” pages 257–74 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 262–67. This is not the typical lexical sense (Nave, *Repentance*, 74–118), but I view the two aorist imperatives in 3:19 as functionally equivalent. For gentiles, see 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; for individuals, Ezek 33:14–16, 19.

⁴²⁵ E.g., Sir 17:24; 44:16; Wis 12:19; Ps. Sol. 9:7; Let. Aris. 188; Jub. 34:21; 1 En. 40:9; 50:3–5; CD 2:5; 10:3; 15:7; 20:17; 1QS 3.1, 3; 5.1; 7.19; m. Abot 4:13, 22; 5:21.

⁴²⁶ E.g., Hos 14:1–2; Tob 13:6; the fifth benediction of the Amida (W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1925], 63). For it hastening the judgment, see comment on Acts 3:19.

⁴²⁷ Jos. Asen. 9:2; 15:7; Pesiq. Rab Kah. 12:20; cf. Acts 14:15; 1 Thess 1:9.

A crucial consequence of repentance, as Luke also emphasizes elsewhere, is forgiveness (2:38; 5:31; 8:22; 26:18; Luke 3:3; 24:47),⁴²⁸ which Luke also associates with faith in Jesus (Acts 10:43; 13:38–39). Preaching repentance in Jesus’s name (Luke 24:47) is concretely expressed by summoning the repentant to baptism in Jesus’s name (Acts 2:38), which figuratively “washes away sins” (22:16). Various ritual lustrations pervaded antiquity, including Judean practice.⁴²⁹

One Jewish use of baptism, and one of the only uses not repeated, was for purifying gentile converts, thus demarcating a new life from its former impurity.⁴³⁰ In contrast to John the Baptist or Peter in Luke-Acts, however, Jewish people traditionally applied this function of immersion only to gentiles. Peter here demands a conversion no less radical, but from members of his own people who must likewise turn to Israel’s God and the divinely appointed king, Jesus. Demanding that Jewish hearers come to God on the same terms as gentiles (cf. Luke 3:8/Matt 3:9) was a radical departure from tradition, though it has theological precedent (Amos 3:2; 9:7–8).

That Jesus’s movement initiated converts with baptism from the start makes sense; it appears in very early Christian sources (e.g., 1 Cor 1:13–17; 10:2; Gal 3:27), and Paul took for granted knowledge about it in churches that he did not found (Rom 6:3–4).⁴³¹ Connecting the dots is also helpful: it is most improbable that the new urban Jesus movement and John the Baptist’s wilderness movement⁴³² came up with the practice independently.

⁴²⁸ Forgiveness is associated with repentance rather than with baptism, but repentance is to be expressed here in baptism (though Luke probably would not attribute mechanical efficacy to it; see Acts 10:47). I see the emphasis here as different from in John’s Gospel (Keener, *John*, 1:546–52).

⁴²⁹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Life* 11; 1QS 3.4–9; N. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1980), 139–43; J. L. Reed, “Archaeological Contributions to the Study of Jesus and the Gospels,” pages 40–54 in *The Historical Jesus in Context* (ed. A.-J. Levine, D. C. Allison Jr., and J. D. Crossan; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 52; Y. Adler, “The Myth of the ‘Ōsar in Second Temple-Period Ritual Baths: An Anachronistic Interpretation of a Modern-Era Innovation,” *JJS* 65 (2, 2014): 263–83.

⁴³⁰ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.9.20; *Sib. Or.* 4.162–65; *m. Pesah.* 8:8; *t. Abod. Zar.* 3.11; *b. Yebam.* 46a, bar.; cf. possibly Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.104. The pervasive ancient Jewish emphasis on ritual purity renders implausible the idea that impure gentiles would be deemed pure without such a washing, and it is unlikely that Judaism borrowed the idea of proselyte baptism from Christians (see discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 1:977–82). But most circles probably originally understood it as merely an initial purification, not the major act of conversion (which was circumcision).

⁴³¹ Cf. also its nomenclature in L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 203.

⁴³² See Mark 1:4; John 1:28; 3:23; 4:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.117.

Baptism “in Jesus’s name”⁴³³ distinguishes this baptism from other Jewish immersion practices, with respect to its object.⁴³⁴ For Luke, baptism in Jesus’s name does not involve a ritual formula uttered over an initiand, but the new believer “calling on the name of the Lord” Jesus (see comment on Acts 2:21; 22:16). This is why Luke always employs the verb *baptizô* with this phrase only in the passive and never the active voice, employing the active form only without the phrase.

This conclusion fulfills the point of Peter’s extended exegesis (2:22–36) of *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* in 2:21: they call on Jesus’s name by being *baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ* (2:38). Those who call on Jesus’s name are his followers (9:21; 22:16; cf. 15:17).⁴³⁵

The Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:21–22), and Jesus baptizes in the Spirit (3:16), so ideally repentance baptism precipitates immediate reception of the Spirit (Acts 2:38–39). Subsequent narratives in Acts will qualify this expectation: it may be our normal expectation, but God is sovereignly free to vary it (8:12, 16; 10:46–47).⁴³⁶ But while water baptism symbolizes and ideally communicates the gift of the Spirit, it does not replace it, as if the act were sufficient without genuine experience with the Spirit (see 10:47; 11:16; 19:5–6; especially 8:12–17).

The gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38) is *the promise* (2:39), explicitly fulfilling earlier comments about the promise of the Spirit (1:4; 2:33; Luke 24:49), the Father’s promised gift (Luke 11:13; Acts 8:20; 10:45; 11:17), which is sometimes identified with being baptized in the Spirit (1:4–5; 11:16–17) or the Spirit being poured (2:17–18, 33; 10:45) or falling on people (10:44; 11:15).⁴³⁷

⁴³³ The various specific Greek prepositions, as often in Koine, are probably roughly interchangeable.

⁴³⁴ The formula in Matt 28:19 likely serves the same function. Some Diaspora Jews may have spoken of repentance “in the name of the Most High God” (*Jos. Asen.* 15:7); later rabbis spoke of genuine proselytes as converts “in the name of” (for the sake of) heaven (I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* [1st ser.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917], 45); Samaritans allegedly circumcised in the name of, or for the sake of, Mount Gerizim (*t. Abod. Zar.* 3:13; *b. Abod. Zar.* 27a, bar.; *y. Yebam.* 8:1, §10).

⁴³⁵ Calling on the deity’s name in prayer meant addressing him (1 Kgs 18:24–26, 32; 2 Kgs 5:11; Ps 9:2; 18:49) or invoking him (1 Chr 16:2).

⁴³⁶ Just as Jesus’s resurrection, exaltation to heaven, and gift of the Spirit are theologically united yet chronologically separated, believers receive access to the full work of the Spirit at conversion (here Luke’s language agrees with other early Christian voices), yet may experience aspects of the Spirit’s empowerment subsequently (and not limited to a single occasion; cf. 2:4; 4:8, 31). Although Luke is a theologian, he is also a historian not afraid to include narrative complexities evoking genuine experience (cf., e.g., 21:4, 11–14).

⁴³⁷ See Tannehill, *Luke*, 239. As in rhetoric, variation was valuable where it would not impair clarity (e.g., Hermogenes, *Method* 4.416). Cf. also verbs of “receiving” with the

Jesus's first followers would have regarded a Christian movement without this gift as no more possible than without the repentance, faith, and baptism that invited it. As noted earlier, this gift includes empowerment to speak for Jesus (1:8; 2:17–18; cf. 4:8; 13:9).

Initially, the promise is to all Israel (*your children*; cf. also 3:20, 25–26). The expression *your children* may develop *your sons and your daughters* in 2:17⁴³⁸ (cf. Luke 13:34). But even if Israel temporarily rejects the offer, it remains available for others who would desire it (13:46; 28:28); such a rejection would effectively buy time for more gentile conversions, since Israel's repentance would usher in Christ's return (Acts 3:19–20; cf. Rom 11:25–26).

Although within the narrative world Peter probably thinks of Diaspora Jews rather than gentiles (cf. Acts 10:28), Luke envisions also gentiles.⁴³⁹ As one might have gathered already from *all flesh* in 2:17, that the promise is for *everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him* (2:39) makes the demand of 2:38 (namely, repentance and baptism in Jesus's name) and the promise of the Spirit (1:8; 2:4, 17–18, 38–39) paradigmatic for all subsequent believers.

All who are far away (2:39), in fact, probably evokes Isa 57:19, another element of which appears later in Acts 10:36. Isaiah's context could refer to both Diaspora Jews returning and to gentiles converting; some other Christians also applied Isaiah's language in that verse to the gentile mission (Eph 2:17; cf. 2:13), and at some point some rabbis applied the text to proselytes.⁴⁴⁰ One of the other two uses in Acts of the Greek word for *far away* (*makran*) also suggests that gentiles are in view here (22:21). By alluding to "far off" gentiles by way of Isaiah's language, Luke again reiterates the prominence of the Spirit for the gentile mission (cf. 10:44–47) – and that gentiles equipped with the Spirit will become partners in that mission.

Spirit in Acts. For God "giving" the Spirit in the LXX, see Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 5 n. 6, citing esp. Num 11:29; Isa 42:1; Ezek 11:19; 36:26–27; 37:6, 14. Some later rabbis spoke of meriting the Spirit (*m. Sotah* 9:15; *t. Sotah* 13:2–4; *Mek. Beshallah* 7.135ff.), though they also spoke of gifts such as the Torah (*Sipre Deut.* 32.5.10; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4.318).

⁴³⁸ Zehnle, *Pentecost Discourse*, 34. *Children* here does not, however, specify age; it means any offspring, including adults (Barrett, *Acts*, 155).

⁴³⁹ Ancients recognized that individuals could speak prophetic truth unwittingly; see, e.g., John 11:49–50; Plutarch, *Isis* 14, *Mor.* 356E; Xenophon, *Eph.* 5.4; *Ab. R. Nat.* 43, §118B.

⁴⁴⁰ J. C. Kirby, *Ephesians: Baptism and Pentecost* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968), 157, citing *Gen. Rab.* 8:4.

Everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him (2:39) plainly echoes the end of Joel 2:32 (3:5 LXX), completing the quotation interrupted in 2:21.⁴⁴¹ Having finished his exposition of *everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* (2:21) by showing that the name on which they must call is Jesus's (2:38), Peter concludes the quotation in 2:39. Paul also applies this text about YHWH to Jesus (Rom 10:9, 13).

Some speakers were known to elaborate for hours; historians did not provide speeches that long, and some careful writers explicitly noted that they could report only some of what was said.⁴⁴² Luke summarizes John the Baptist's message of repentance (Luke 3:7–10), as good news including many "other exhortations" (3:18). Luke writes similarly here, perhaps implicitly comparing Peter's now-empowered preaching with John the Baptist. Acts 2:40 summarizes the rest of Peter's exhortations: *Save yourselves from this corrupt generation!* The immediate referent of "saved" here and in 2:47 is Joel's prophecy in 2:21: whoever calls on the Lord's name will be saved in Christ (4:12; 11:14; 15:1, 11; 16:31).

In possible contrast with the pious generation of Jesus's childhood (Luke 1:50–55, 68–79) and other generations (Acts 13:36; 14:16; 15:21), Jesus offered harsh words for his own *corrupt generation* (Luke 7:31; 11:30–32; 17:25; cf. perhaps Acts 8:33). Guiltier than rebellious generations before it (Luke 11:50–51), it was destined for judgment (21:32). Peter's term for *corrupt* here (*skolios*) evokes the *perverse and crooked* [*skolia*] *generation* of Deut 32:5.⁴⁴³ The crooked (*skolios*) generation needed to be straightened to be prepared for the Lord's coming (Luke 3:5; cf. Acts 13:10).

After each evangelistic sermon in Acts, Luke reports people's acceptance or rejection (2:41; 4:4; 5:33; 7:54; 8:6, 36; 10:44; 13:44, 48–50; 17:32; 22:22; 28:24, 29). Ancient writers sometimes cited dramatic conversion reports to indicate the success of their protagonist's preaching.⁴⁴⁴

Counting converts precisely would have been difficult on that day, though the church's subsequent size (far more than the 120 in 1:15) would

⁴⁴¹ As is widely agreed (Haenchen, *Acts*, 184 n. 5; Dupont, *Salvation*, 22; Zehnle, *Pentecost Discourse*, 34; Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 231–32; Marshall, "Acts," 536, 543).

⁴⁴² Xenophon, *Apol.* 22; Aeschines, *Embassy* 118; Musonius Rufus 7, p. 58.29–30; Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.23–24; *Hist.* 1.15–16.

⁴⁴³ Paul quotes this line in Phil 2:15, and Jesus quotes part of it in Luke 9:41 (par. Matt 17:17); cf. *Sib. Or.* 1.124. Both Deut 32:5 and Ps 78:8 (77:8 LXX), which evokes it with mention of a *stubborn* [*skolia*] *generation*, refer to the wilderness generation that rebelled against Moses.

⁴⁴⁴ Van der Horst, "Parallels to Acts," 58.

have aided estimates. Exaggerated estimates are legion in ancient historical reports;⁴⁴⁵ Josephus inflates them even in the biblical text.⁴⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the more verifiable ancient reports also often reveal large numbers,⁴⁴⁷ and Jerusalem's population was probably three times higher in this period than the estimates once used to challenge Luke's numbers.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, against detractors, rapid growth at the beginning of other charismatic movements renders plausible Luke's growth figures.⁴⁴⁹

The assumption that three thousand people could not be baptized in one afternoon in the temple area⁴⁵⁰ misunderstands both the logistics of baptism and the water resources available there. Like other Jewish immersions, including on the temple mount, these baptisms were essentially self-dunkings (probably descending forward); converts could carry out the instructions themselves. Further, the temple area included massive water resources for preliminary purifications.⁴⁵¹ In addition, for the temple's other needs, archaeologists have excavated thirty-four cisterns near the temple mount, with a capacity of up to "8,000–12,000 cubic metres."⁴⁵² Tradition also reports ritual immersions in the massive Pool of Siloam.⁴⁵³ With a total of 150 *known* immersion pools in Jerusalem, the immersion of

⁴⁴⁵ E.g., Thucydides 5.68.2; Polybius 12.17.1–12.22.7; Livy 3.8.10; Josephus, *War* 6.423–25; Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.61; Pliny, *Ep.* 9.16.1; Lucian, *Hist.* 20; cf. B. D. H. Hilbert, "185,000 Slain Maccabean Enemies (Times Two): Hyperbole in the Books of Maccabees," *ZAW* 122 (1, 2010): 102–6.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 6.203 with 1 Sam 18:27 MT.

⁴⁴⁷ E.g., Polybius 1.63.4–8; 3.33.17–18.

⁴⁴⁸ See, e.g., M. Broshi, "Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem," *BAR* 4 (2, 1978): 10–15 (14); W. Reinhardt, "The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church," pages 237–65 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 237, 240–45. For the numbers accommodated on the temple mount, see Sanders, *Judaism*, 126–27.

⁴⁴⁹ See more fully C. S. Keener, "The Plausibility of Luke's Growth Figures in Acts 2.41; 4.4; 21.20," *JGRCJ* 7 (2010): 140–63.

⁴⁵⁰ E.g., Barrett, *Acts*, 159.

⁴⁵¹ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.12; cf., e.g., R. Reich, "Two Possible *Miqwa'ot* on the Temple Mount," *IEJ* 39 (1–2, 1989): 63–65; E. Regev, "The Ritual Baths near the Temple Mount and Extra-purification before Entering the Temple Courts," *IEJ* 55 (2, 2005): 194–204; S. Haber, "Going Up to Jerusalem: Pilgrimage, Purity, the Historical Jesus," pages 49–67 in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity* (ed. P. A. Harland; Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2011), 56–58; D. E. Aune, *Jesus, Gospel Tradition and Paul in the Context of Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity: Collected Essays II* (WUNT 303; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 432–37.

⁴⁵² S. Safrai, "The Temple," 865–907 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 884.

⁴⁵³ *M. Zabim* 1:5; *y. Ta'an.* 2:1, §8; J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1969), 320.

three thousand persons in the span of a few hours is the last concern we should have with the text.⁴⁵⁴

Bridging Horizons: Repentance (Acts 2:38)

As noted above, Luke provides complementary language for coming to Christ: faith in Jesus as Lord (Acts 16:31), expressed in turning to God in Jesus's name (2:38), expressed in sacrificing whatever necessary to meet others' needs (Luke 3:11; 18:22). That is, genuine "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus," proclaimed to Jew and Greek alike (Acts 20:21), are different sides of a coin. New faith in Christ is expressed in a new life, because genuine faith stakes its life on the truth of Jesus and his kingdom message. The fruits of the repentance described in 2:38 are elucidated concretely in the life of the new community in 2:41–47.

The NT describes in various ways entering Christ: a new legal status (justification), a new union (in Christ), moving from darkness to light, from death to life, being born from the Spirit, being liberated from sin, death, and evil powers, and so forth. What all of these descriptions have in common is a change that occurs only through Christ. Some circles today seek to articulate this in language such as "personal commitment to Christ," "entrusting your life to Christ," or "coming back to God's side through Christ." Nominalism, however – which often justifies neglect of Christ in light of the values or behavior of those around us – can water down the meaning of any language.

Because baptism represented an act of conversion, requiring this act of those who considered themselves heirs of the kingdom showed that no one could depend on their ancestry or another default status. Jew and gentile alike had to humble themselves, the former abandoning reliance on their prior status, the latter abandoning corrupted beliefs and practices. Today some articulate this concept in the saying, "God has no grandchildren."

Such calls to conversion made sense for first-generation converts in the New Testament churches. But what about their children, who could grow up nurtured in their faith and might not recall one specific moment when their faith became more personal than before? Given high childhood mortality in antiquity, Christians also eventually introduced infant baptism

⁴⁵⁴ See B. Grasham, "Archaeology and Christian Baptism," *ResQ* 43 (2, 2001): 113–16. Pools also apparently occurred on roads en route to Jerusalem, for pilgrims (D. Amit, "A *Miqveh* Complex near Alon Shevut," *'Atiqot* 38 [1999]: 75–84).

to cover children within the sphere of their faith (cf. 1 Cor 7:14). Although people are not born in Christ, it is far more important, from an NT perspective, that a person believes than that she recalls the specific time when she first believed. Although NT baptism is an act of conversion, churches that practice infant baptism believe they offer an equivalent expression for those with subsequent public declarations of commitment (e.g., confirmation). What matters most is that the commitment is genuine – and many NT depictions of Christian commitment still stand as a challenge in parts of the world where Christian faith has become merely a default setting that costs nothing. ****

2:42–47: THE LIFE OF THE EMPOWERED COMMUNITY

The goal of the Pentecost experience, with its empowerment for mission, includes a community modeling the ideal, proleptically eschatological lifestyle of the kingdom (cf. comment on 1:3–8; 2:1–4). The community is now much larger than the earlier united nucleus in 1:12–14; the Holy Spirit's activity has brought about church growth. The ideal church offers a pivotal climax and goal of Luke's larger story, though for Luke this cannot be complete until it involves representatives of all nations (1:8).

Ancient writers often added summary statements and sections, where they also had freedom to offer their perspective.⁴⁵⁵ (It was common to recapitulate one's preceding argument at the end of a section.)⁴⁵⁶ Luke has a number of summary statements, some in the Gospel (Luke 4:14, 37; 5:15; 7:17) but especially in Acts to trace the spread of the message about Jesus (Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20; 28:31; cf. 13:49; 19:10, 17). These summary statements function something like a narrative "refrain."⁴⁵⁷ In addition to such focused statements, Luke occasionally has a summary *section*, as here, depicting schematically the life of the community, surveying and connecting material where he has less detailed narrative to recount.⁴⁵⁸ The early

⁴⁵⁵ See, e.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 3.5.25; 4.8.19; 1 Kgs 11:41–43; 14:29–31; 16:5–6; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.9.31; *Quinct.* 19.60; 28.85–29.90 (at end of proofs); Josephus, *War* 2.119–166; *Ant.* 13.171–173; 18.11–25; 1 Cor 6:20; 10:31–11:1; 14:39–40. On freedoms, e.g., B. Witherington, "Editing the Good News: Some Synoptic Lessons for the Study of Acts," pages 324–47 in Witherington, ed., *History, Literature, and Society*, 346.

⁴⁵⁶ E.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 3.9.31; 1 Cor 14:39–40; 4Q270 frg. 11, col. 1.15.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf., e.g., Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 3. pref. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25; Rom 5:2–3, 11.

⁴⁵⁸ H. A. Brehm, "The Significance of the Summaries for Interpreting Acts," *SWJT* 33 (1, 1990): 29–40. They are used to expand material in *Rhet. Alex.* 22, 1434b.8–11.

major summaries (2:42–47; 4:32–35; 5:12–16) emphasize the theme of empowered witness to the community in Jerusalem (see 1:8), and serve an apologetic function by emphasizing the community's virtue.⁴⁵⁹

In this summary section, the Jerusalem community of disciples begins to fulfill Jesus's teachings and model in the Gospel on various points: prayer, continuing signs, eating together, and sharing of possessions (cf. Luke 12:33). Both here and in the Gospel, through explicit quotations and implicit allusions, Luke also grounds this lifestyle in Israel's ideals and the example of its prophets (e.g., Deut 15:7–8; 2 Kgs 4:38–44); he also uses hellenistic language for the ideal community. Luke himself recognizes that the Jerusalem church experienced conflicts at times (5:3–4; 6:1), but affirms that the new life of the Spirit experienced as a norm by the earliest Jesus movement epitomizes God's plan. Presumably he also intends it as a model for Spirit-filled communities of his own day where not restricted by historical particulars (meeting in a temple was possible only for the Jerusalem church).

Scholars are often too ingenious in discovering chiasmic structures, but there may be one here:

- A Effective Evangelism (through preaching, 2:41)
- B Shared worship and meals (2:42)
- C Shared possessions (2:44–45)
- B' Shared worship and meals (2:46)
- A' Effective Evangelism (through lifestyle, 2:47)

If so, the sharing of possessions is a central (perhaps because so distinctive) feature of Luke's vision of the early Christian community formed by the Spirit, leading to a wide impact on the society around them (cf. again in the next corporate outpouring of the Spirit in 4:32–35).

Expressions of community life in 2:42–47 include the apostles' teaching, probably based especially on what they learned from Jesus and from Scripture; fellowship and breaking bread together; and prayers. Although a fixed order of service is unlikely here, elements appear from which one naturally developed.⁴⁶⁰ While apostles probably taught especially at the large gatherings in the temple, some teaching may have also

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. G. E. Sterling, "‘Athletes of Virtue’: An Analysis of the Summaries in Acts (2:41–47; 4:32–35; 5:12–16)," *JBL* 113 (4, 1994): 679–96.

⁴⁶⁰ See Justin, *Apol.* 1.67; cf. the rigid order in 1QS 6.1–8.

occurred during shared meals in homes.⁴⁶¹ Luke's audience will appreciate the portrait of the ideal community here; even outsiders respected synagogues and philosophic schools that provided sustained moral instruction.

Fellowship (*koinônia*) in 2:42 runs deeper than casual conversation; in the NT it is normally fellowship through the shared bond of Christ or the Spirit (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1; John 1:3, 6–7), and the term sometimes indicates economic sharing, which is included here (Acts 2:44–45; cf. Rom 15:26–27; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; cf. Rom 12:13; Gal 6:6; Phil 4:15). Because “breaking bread” is so closely connected grammatically with “fellowship” here, it seems likely that disciples sharing possessions included common meals sometimes at the expense of those who could afford the food. It was a daily (2:46) practice that involved shared use of property in (presumably) the more ample homes.

Breaking “bread” functions as a metonymy for a meal, however simple.⁴⁶² Meals earlier during the day were simple enough that they might be limited literally to bread, the one food necessary to be able to offer to a guest (Luke 11:5).⁴⁶³ The later, main meal could be ampler, although it, like other Jewish meals, would start with breaking and blessing bread and blessing wine.

On the narrative level, the breaking of bread here evokes and presumably includes the Lord's Supper.⁴⁶⁴ Meals together characterized much of Jesus's ministry (Luke 5:29; 7:34, 36; 9:16–17; 11:37; 14:1, 13; 15:2; cf. 10:7), and subsequent meals together would recall his presence among them. The final meal with Jesus (22:14–20), established the grid through which all common meals afterward (after the resurrection, see 24:30, 41, 43; Acts 1:4a; 2:42, 46; 10:41; 20:7; cf. 16:34; 27:35–36) should be understood, commemorating what

⁴⁶¹ Lectures or discussions, including of Torah, could happen during other meals; e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 3.12.1; 6.31.13; Plutarch, *T.-T.* 1.1.5, *Mor.* 614F–615B; Aulus Gellius 7.13; Sir 9:15; Ps 154:14; *m. Abot* 3:2–3.

⁴⁶² On metonymy, see *Rhet. Her.* 4.43; Rowe, “Style,” 126. As the most basic staple, “bread” could easily stand for food in general (Luke 4:3–4; 7:33; 9:3; 11:3, 5; 14:1, 15; 15:17).

⁴⁶³ The urban working classes ate especially bread and legumes (Stambaugh, *City*, 200).

⁴⁶⁴ Since bread and wine (Luke 22:19–20) were simply (as at other meals) noted components of a meal (cf. Luke 7:33), the earliest version of the Lord's Supper probably involved eating a meal together (1 Cor 11:20–21, 34; Jude 12).

he had done (Luke 22:19).⁴⁶⁵ Such meals prefigured the eschatological banquet (14:15; 22:16, 30; cf. Mark 14:25; 1 Cor 11:26).⁴⁶⁶

Common meals were well-known in Greco-Roman society, including in associations.⁴⁶⁷ Diaspora Jews also often shared common meals,⁴⁶⁸ as did various Jewish sects.⁴⁶⁹ Sharing meals was a concrete way to identify with fellow members of one's spiritual extended family (cf. Luke 8:21; 18:29–30).

Table-fellowship invited covenant relationship among those who shared it,⁴⁷⁰ potentially even for multiple generations.⁴⁷¹ Shared meals ideally established unity, precluded speaking against each other, and (in the eastern Mediterranean) often displayed equality,⁴⁷² despite many breaches in practice.⁴⁷³ Still, seating by rank was also common,⁴⁷⁴ a hierarchical principle against which Jesus warned (Luke 14:1–14).⁴⁷⁵

Prayers together, which preceded the outpouring (Acts 1:14), continued, probably in both the larger (cf. 2:42; 2:46–3:1; perhaps 4:23–24) and smaller (cf. 12:12) meetings. Although a Lukan emphasis (1:14), it does genuinely

⁴⁶⁵ The language of memory/commemoration was fitting in a Passover context (Exod 13:3; Deut 16:3); for the supper as a Passover meal, see J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1966); esp. B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 374–517. As Passover annually reenacted the past redemption, so the Lord's Supper recalled and invited disciples to reexperience Jesus's act of redemption.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. J. P. Heil, *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: An Audience-Oriented Approach* (SBLMS 52; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1999), 235–243, and esp. 312. Some have argued that the communal meal at Qumran foreshadows the messianic banquet, though others demur.

⁴⁶⁷ See, e.g., P. A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 59, 74–83; R. S. Ascough, "Forms of Commensality in Greco-Roman Associations," *CW* 102 (1, 2008): 33–45.

⁴⁶⁸ See Josephus, *Ant.* 14.214–15; B. Blue, "The Influence of Jewish Worship on Luke's Presentation of the Early Church," pages 473–98 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 476–77.

⁴⁶⁹ See, e.g., 1QS 6.4–5, 20–21; Philo, *Contempl.* 82.

⁴⁷⁰ See, e.g., *Jub.* 35:27; 45:5; Cicero, *Fam.* 13.19.1; 13.25.1; 13.36.1; Plutarch, *Coriol.* 10.3.

⁴⁷¹ Homer, *Il.* 6.212–31; Cicero, *Fam.* 13.34.1.

⁴⁷² Aeschines, *Embassy* 22, 55; 1QS 5.25; 7.15–16; H.-J. Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 49; D. E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 54–55; the ideal of equality in Plutarch, *T.-T.* 1.2.3, *Mor.* 616E; 2.10.2, *Mor.* 644AB; Lucian, *Carousal* 43; at Jewish festivals, *m. Bik.* 3.4; *t. Bik.* 2.10; at the Lord's Supper, see 1 Cor 11:21–22; Theodoret of Cyr, *Comm.* 1 Cor. 236–37.

⁴⁷³ E.g., Martial, *Epig.* 3.12, 49; 4.85; 12.28; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.6.1; Juvenal, *Sat.* 4.24–25, 37–48; Lucian, *Nigr.* 22.

⁴⁷⁴ Plutarch, *T.-T.* 1.2.3, *Mor.* 616E; 1.3, *Mor.* 619BF; Juvenal, *Sat.* 4.15–18; 1QS 6.4–5; *y. Ta'an.* 4.2, §§9, 12; *Ter.* 8.7; 1 Cor 11:21; D. E. Smith, *Symposium*, 33, 55–57, 136.

⁴⁷⁵ See B. J. Capper, "Reciprocity and the Ethic of Acts," pages 499–518 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 514–16.

reflect early Christian life.⁴⁷⁶ When meeting in homes, individual Christians probably offered both fixed prayers learned from the synagogue⁴⁷⁷ and personal (perhaps usually spontaneous) prayers, practiced by other Jews⁴⁷⁸ but especially important in the charismatic worship of the early Christians (1 Cor 14:14–16, 26).

Luke's summary statement about apostolic wonders and signs in 2:43 is one of a number of miracle summaries in Acts (e.g., 5:12; 8:7; 19:11–12; 28:9);⁴⁷⁹ Luke follows with a particular example (3:1–10). This is far from the only place in which Luke mentions people responding to divine activity with *awe* or *fear* (5:5, 11; 19:17; Luke 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37), though we might well assume that it would often follow even when Luke does not mention it!

Bridging Horizons: The New Community (Acts 2:42–47)

Like New Year's resolutions, momentary decisions and enthusiasm often fail to persist (cf. Luke 8:12–14; 22:31–34; cf. Acts 8:14, 20–23; 13:43; 14:22; 20:30–32) without social reinforcement (cf. Heb 3:13; 10:25). These converts, however, take the radical step of immersion (Acts 2:41) and are immediately integrated into the life of the new community (2:42–47).

Like Jewish synagogues but unlike gentiles, Christians worshiped together.⁴⁸⁰ Large crowds could gather for the apostles' teaching and prayer (3:1) in the temple courts; this one temple to the true God probably provided the only suitable urban venue for a "megachurch" in the ancient Mediterranean world. Even here, however, these large meetings were supplemented by more familial settings resembling small/cell groups or house churches, perhaps chosen organically by neighborhoods or (often) by finding homes

⁴⁷⁶ E.g., Rom 1:9–10; Eph 6:18; Phil 2:3–4; Col 4:2–4, 12; 1 Thess 3:10; 5:17, 25; 2 Thess 3:1; 1 Tim 2:1–2; 5:5; Jms 5:13–18; 1 Pet 4:7; Rev 5:8; 8:3–4.

⁴⁷⁷ Jews gathered for prayer (Josephus, *Life* 277) and some fixed prayers clearly existed (the Shema; probably also early forms of the Kaddish, Amida, and some examples at Qumran), but scholars debate how widely and how early they prayed these prayers in unison.

⁴⁷⁸ E.g., *m. Abot* 2:13; *Ber.* 4:4; see further Moore, *Judaism*, 2:220–21; I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (2nd ser.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 84.

⁴⁷⁹ For comparison among miracle summaries in Luke-Acts, see A. Lindemann, "Einheit und Vielfalt im lukanischen Doppelwerk: Beobachtungen zu Reden, Wundererzählungen, und Mahlberichten," pages 225–53 in Verheyden, *Unity*, 248–50. Others also summarized apostolic signs (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3–4).

⁴⁸⁰ Gentiles could worship publicly but did not assemble for this purpose except during festivals.

large enough to gather several families for meals.⁴⁸¹ Paul's ideal picture of the church in 1 Cor 14:26 was feasible partly because meeting in homes ideally allowed people to be in relationship with one another and each to contribute to the greater good, regardless of class differences. ****

Sharing possessions (2:44–45) lies at the center of the summary in 2:41–47, and recurs, in fuller detail, at the next outpouring of the Spirit in 4:32–35.⁴⁸² It exemplifies and explains Jesus's example and sometimes hyperbolic teaching regarding possessions (Luke 3:11; 9:58; 12:33; 14:33).⁴⁸³ The converts' repentance (2:37–38) reflects the same character demanded of the repentant in the Gospel (Luke 3:10–11; 18:18, 22); they are truly those *who believed* (Acts 2:44; cf. 4:32). They recognize fellow believers as spiritual kin (e.g., Luke 8:21; 18:29–30).⁴⁸⁴

Such total economic devotion went far beyond the normal entry dues for guilds or associations.⁴⁸⁵ On the other extreme, Essenes went beyond most ideal Greek sects and practiced complete community of goods;⁴⁸⁶ most people were readier to respect such radicalism than to imitate it.⁴⁸⁷ But whereas surrender of property was obligatory on admittance to the Essenes' wilderness community, the urban model in Acts is voluntary.⁴⁸⁸ It coheres with the highest ideals of biblical and early Jewish faith.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸¹ Upper-story apartments in Roman cities generally allowed only enough room for sleeping, although outside hallways provided more space; ground floor dwellings could accommodate larger numbers, with rural villas accommodating the most.

⁴⁸² On this passage, see also Hoyt, "Poor in Luke-Acts," 213–22.

⁴⁸³ Cf. radical discipleship in Luke 5:11; 9:23, 58–62; 14:26–34; 18:22–30. For radical sharing and eternal destiny, see also 12:16–21; 16:9–13, 21, 25; cf. 18:28–29. Jesus's disciples also traveled together and shared a common purse. Cf. C. M. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics: A Study in Their Coherence and Character* (WUNT 2.275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. N. Scholl, *Lukas und seine Apostelgeschichte: Die Verbreitung des Glaubens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 25.

⁴⁸⁵ For fees, cf. D. E. Smith, *Symposium*, 119.

⁴⁸⁶ E.g., 1QS 1.11–13; 6.22–23; Josephus, *War* 2.122–25; *Ant.* 18.20; Philo, *Good Person* 75–76, 85–87; *Hypoth.* 11.4–5; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.17.13. I find persuasive the majority view that the Qumran sectarians were Essenes.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Diogenes, *Ep.* 9; Philo, *Good Person* 84; Josephus, *War* 2.122; *Ant.* 18.20; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.15.73; note Acts 5:13. For views about possessions in antiquity, see Keener, *Acts*, 1:1013–26, esp. 1023–26; M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church: Aspects of a Social History of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974).

⁴⁸⁸ See J. A. Fitzmyer, "Jewish Christianity in Acts in Light of the Qumran Scrolls," pages 233–57 in Keck and Martyn, *Studies*, 243 (citing 1QS 6.19); K.-J. Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology* (JSNTSup 155; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 234–51.

⁴⁸⁹ Exod 16:17–18; Deut 13:6 (LXX 13:7); 15:4; *Let. Aris.* 228, 257, 263, 282; cf. Philo, *Heir* 191; 2 Cor 8:14; Josephus, *Ant* 3.29. Early Christianity's charitable activity became distinctive (B. W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 104).

The language with which Luke describes the sharing is not merely positive, but probably even reflects language normally used to depict ideal utopian communities such as a primeval golden age, Pythagorean communities, and (in hellenistic Jewish depictions) pious Essenes and Therapeutae.⁴⁹⁰ (Such language includes *one soul* and *in common* in 4:32.)⁴⁹¹ Still, unlike full utopias, Luke does not describe abolition of private property (12:12-13; Luke 6:34-35; 14:12-14).⁴⁹² Rather, members sold property to help other members *as any had need* (Acts 2:45). Their resources do not become community property, but are designated for the poor; they were not against property, but valued people altogether more.

Because the adage that "friends share all things in common" was widespread,⁴⁹³ Luke may also invoke the language of friendship here.⁴⁹⁴ Greeks often viewed a friend as "another self," one's equal.⁴⁹⁵ Early Stoics thus critiqued social inequality,⁴⁹⁶ though more recent Stoics had adapted to the sociopolitical norms of the empire.⁴⁹⁷ Equality could characterize an ideal

⁴⁹⁰ Plato, *Rep.* 6.499CD; Justin, *Epit.* 43.1.3; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 95.53; Plutarch, *Bride* 20, *Mor.* 140DE; Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.11b, p. 64.1-9; 2.7.11d, p. 66.1-4; 2.7.11i, p. 76.17-20; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.2; Van der Horst, "Parallels to Acts," 58-59; D. L. Mealand, "Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV," *JTS*, n.s., 28 (1, 1977): 97-99; Capper, "Reciprocity," 507-8. For Pythagorean practice, see Aulus Gellius 1.9.12; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.10; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 30.167-68; for other ancient ideals, Virgil, *Georg.* 4.155-57; Anacharsis, *Ep.* 9. Some thinkers pragmatically demurred (Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.1.2, 10, 1260b, 1261b; Diogenes Laertius 10.1.11).

⁴⁹¹ A. J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 90.

⁴⁹² A. C. Mitchell, "'Greet the Friends by Name': New Testament Evidence for the Greco-Roman *Topos* on Friendship," pages 225-62 in *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (ed. J. T. Fitzgerald; SBLRBS 34; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 240-48; idem, "The Social Function of Friendship in Acts 2:44-47 and 4:32-37," *JBL* 111 (2, 1992): 255-72 (260-61, 264-67).

⁴⁹³ See, e.g., Seneca, *De Benef.* 7.4.1; Martial, *Epig.* 2.43.1-2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.110; Plutarch, *T.-T.* 9.14.2, *Mor.* 743E; *Flatt.* 24, *Mor.* 65AB; Ps.-Phoc. 30.

⁴⁹⁴ A. C. Mitchell, "Social Function," 257.

⁴⁹⁵ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 18.81-82; Plato, *Laws* 8.837AB; Aristotle, *E.E.* 7.9.1, 1241b; Arrian, *Alex.* 7.14.6; Diogenes Laertius 5.31; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 29.162; 30.167; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.317; see Keener, *John*, 1008-11 (esp. 1008-9). For the "second self," see, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 17.37.6; Cicero, *Fam.* 7.5.1; 13.1.5.

⁴⁹⁶ A. Erskine, *The Hellenistic Stoa: Political Thought and Action* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 121-22. Pythagoreans likewise associated ideal equality with sharing in common rather than private property (Diogenes Laertius 8.1.10; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 30.167; cf. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.33; 8.2.65). Others opined that it ought to start with sharing at table (Plutarch, *T.-T.* 1.2.3, *Mor.* 616E; 2.10.2, *Mor.* 644AB; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 1.12C).

⁴⁹⁷ Erskine, *Stoa*, 149, 181.

city or state.⁴⁹⁸ Luke thus shows the early church as fulfilling the highest Greek aspirations of friendship.

Although Luke's language is ideal, it undoubtedly reflects a genuine radicalism in the earliest community. The history of movements suggests that it is more likely that the church would move away from radical ideals on possessions as it incorporated more members,⁴⁹⁹ than that it would have invented ideals it never practiced.⁵⁰⁰ The practice in 2:44–45 continues to be presupposed in 6:1–6. Use of ideal hellenistic language here no more negates the events it reflects than it does in Philo's or Josephus's ideal, hellenistic depictions of the Essenes.⁵⁰¹ Such countercultural values continued to pervade ancient Christianity.⁵⁰²

Bridging Horizons: Sharing Possessions (Acts 2:44–45)

Reception history reveals various attempts to evade the text's demands, domesticating them to fit one's context.⁵⁰³ Nevertheless, various renewal movements in history have successfully emulated the radical model of Acts 2:44–45, including not only monastic movements, but also early Moravians,⁵⁰⁴ John Wesley,⁵⁰⁵ and, more recently, the communitarian Jesus Family in China.⁵⁰⁶ Although among them only Hutterites practice full

⁴⁹⁸ Justin, *Epit.* 3.3.3; Lucian, *Hermot.* 22; Marcus Aurelius 1.14; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 363.6–7.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. D. B. Kraybill and D. M. Sweetland, "Possessions in Luke-Acts: A Sociological Perspective," *PRSt* 10 (3, 1983): 215–39.

⁵⁰⁰ For other arguments favoring authenticity, see, e.g., Finger, *Meals*, 244–45; also S. S. Bartchy, "Community of Goods in Acts: Idealization or Social Reality?" pages 309–18 in *The Future of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Augsburg Fortress, 1991); esp. Capper, "Context."

⁵⁰¹ Prior skepticism on that point firmly refuted by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls; see Capper, "Context," 335.

⁵⁰² See, e.g., Justin, *Apol.* 1.14; Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.11–12; Lucian, *Peregr.* 13; cf. Hengel, *Property*, 42–45; Cook, *Interpretation*, 84–87.

⁵⁰³ For reception history, see D. B. McGee, "Sharing Possessions: A Study in Biblical Ethics," pages 163–78 in *With Steadfast Purpose: Essays on Acts in Honor of Henry Jackson Flanders, Jr.* (ed. N. H. Keathley; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1990), 166, 177; esp. Finger, *Meals*, 13–45.

⁵⁰⁴ G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1962), 429; cf. 229–33.

⁵⁰⁵ T. W. Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 25, 97–117 (esp. 111–16).

⁵⁰⁶ A. Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 135; D. Zhaoming, "Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations," pages 437–66 in Anderson and Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal*, 452–64; T. Yamamori and K.-k. Chan, *Witnesses to Power* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 54–62.

communal sharing, Anabaptists have provided a consistent and desperately needed witness to the rest of the church in this area.⁵⁰⁷ Luke's depiction here does not demand universal monasticism or Hutterite sharing of goods (cf. 12:12–13). It does, however, call into question the seriousness with which some Western Christians practice Jesus's teachings in Luke's Gospel.⁵⁰⁸ ****

The subject of community life in 2:46–47 further elaborates the topic in 2:42. Luke's term *together* in 2:46 (Gr. *homothumadon*) depicts the unity of the church in 1:14; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25.⁵⁰⁹ Ancient orators and moralists often emphasized the value of unity.⁵¹⁰ In Greek, *day by day* frames verses 46 and 47; believers' shared lives daily brought about a daily increase of others joining the movement (cf. 16:5).

Daily meeting in the temple follows Jesus's example (Luke 19:47; 21:37; 22:53).⁵¹¹ People in ancient cities especially congregated in their public space, including temples.⁵¹² The massive Jerusalem temple – easily one of the largest in the empire – could host vast crowds in its courts and surrounding areas.⁵¹³ The temple mount comprised 1,527,920 square feet, i.e., about 35 acres.⁵¹⁴ Ancient teachers often lectured in temple courts as public locations,⁵¹⁵ and most other Jews other than Essenes shared Jerusalem's temple courts.⁵¹⁶

⁵⁰⁷ McGee, "Possessions," 167–68; G. H. Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 232, 426–29, esp. 429; Finger, *Meals*, 21–22.

⁵⁰⁸ As Anabaptist ethicist Ronald Sider notes, the text does not "abolish all private property"; rather, believers sold their goods "whenever there was need" (R. J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* [Dallas: Word, 1990], 76).

⁵⁰⁹ Outside Acts, only at Rom 15:25 in the NT. See A. J. Thompson, "The Unity of the Church in Acts in Its Literary Setting" (PhD dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2004).

⁵¹⁰ See, e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.17; 38.5–8; 40.26; 4 Macc 13:25; Sir 25:1; Wis 18:9; Mek. Bah. 1.108ff.; Keener, *Acts*, 3:2287–89; esp. M. M. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 76–79.

⁵¹¹ Cf. daily sacrifice (Luke 9:23), prayer for bread (11:3), and feeding the poor (Acts 6:1). Believers meeting daily remains the ideal pattern in Heb 3:13; 10:25; Did. 4.2; *Barn.* 19.10.

⁵¹² Stambaugh, *City*, 111, 113; R. L. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations," pages 125–49 in Neyrey, *Social World*, 134.

⁵¹³ E.g., the gallery in Josephus, *War.* 2.344.

⁵¹⁴ McRay, *Archaeology*, 102.

⁵¹⁵ E.g., Iamblichus, *V.P.* 9.50; 21.96; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.2; *m. Ker.* 1:7; *Ab. R. Nat.* 38A; 41, §114B; Safrai, "Temple," 905; D. F. Watson, "Education: Jewish and Greco-Roman," *DNTB* 308–13 (310).

⁵¹⁶ See E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 36–37.

Although Jesus regarded the temple as facing judgment (Luke 21:5–6), he and the disciples regarded it as an appropriate place for worship and teaching (Luke 19:47; 20:1; 21:5, 37–38; 22:53; Mk 12:35; 13:1; 14:49), and they continued to worship in the temple in subsequent decades that Luke knows firsthand (cf. Acts 21:20, 26). Luke’s Gospel begins and ends in the temple (Luke 1:9–22; 24:52–53); Acts moves beyond it, but only respectfully. Public worship in the temple would have incidentally drawn attention to their devotion, generating favorable publicity (Acts 2:47).

Meetings from house to house (Acts 2:46) complement the public meetings (cf. 20:20) and follow Jesus’s instructions for spreading the message (Luke 10:5–7). Outside Jerusalem and initially synagogues (Acts 18:4; 19:8), house congregations were usually the one meeting place available for early Christians (cf. 8:3; 12:12; 16:40; 18:7; 20:20).⁵¹⁷

With notable exceptions,⁵¹⁸ even the more spacious homes rarely held comfortably more than fifty persons. Even those with wealthy homes tended to host smaller banquets in their dining room; ten or fifteen may have been a common number.⁵¹⁹ As basic observation of group dynamics confirms, however, smaller groups tend to invite more interaction. It also allowed a more familial setting, ideal in view of Jesus’s teaching (Luke 8:21; 18:29–30).

Emphasis on *praising God* (a term also in Luke 2:13, 20; 19:37; Acts 3:8–9) pervades ancient Israelite worship,⁵²⁰ here it probably includes singing, as typically in the Psalms.⁵²¹ Given believers’ experience on Pentecost (2:4), some of their worship in home settings probably included inspired praise in unknown languages (1 Cor 14:15). But Scripture already offered precedent for orderly liturgical worship that was also charismatic and prophetic (1 Chron 25:1–3).

⁵¹⁷ Homes in the Gospel probably foreshadow this pattern (Luke 5:29; 7:36–37; 8:51; 9:4; 10:5–7; 14:1; 19:5, 9; 22:11). See further Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2; Jesus’s instructions appear in both Mark 6:10 and in Q (Luke 10:5–7//Matt 10:12–14).

⁵¹⁸ See, e.g., Acts 1:13; D. L. Balch, “Rich Pompeiian Houses, Shops for Rent, and the Huge Apartment Building in Herculaneum as Typical Spaces for Pauline House Churches,” *JSNT* 27 (1, 2004): 27–46; villas and open courtyards.

⁵¹⁹ Cf. the invited diners in Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 17.21.

⁵²⁰ The term used here appears forty to fifty times in Psalms, and over a hundred total times in the LXX. Most of the chronicler’s many passages associate this praise with Lord’s house (e.g., 1 Chron 16:4, 7, 10, 35–36, 41; 23:5, 30; 29:13; 2 Chron 5:13; 6:26; 7:3; 8:14; 31:2).

⁵²¹ Cf. also Acts 16:25; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Qumran thanksgiving hymns. Lukan examples of prayer can evoke biblical psalms, as in Acts 4:25–26; Luke 1:46–55.

The term that the NRSV renders *goodwill* in 2:47 it typically translates *favor*; as Jesus had favor at the beginning (Luke 2:40, 52), so here does the church.⁵²² The apostolic church was able to build on the foundation that Jesus laid in Jerusalem (Luke 19:48; 20:1, 19, 26, 45; 21:38; 22:2, 6; 24:18–19). Historians presented favorably growth of colonies or other groups.⁵²³ Such popularity was not always permanent and thus must be used wisely when available (see Luke 4:22, 28; cf. Luke 19:37–38; 23:13, 18); ancient literature (and modern media) often show how quickly public sentiments can shift (cf. Acts 12:3).⁵²⁴

Although the apostles play a strategic role (Acts 2:43), the entire church's "favor" with the people seems to have contributed to the continuing conversions; whereas the Spirit's empowerment for preaching had been effective (2:41), the Spirit's empowerment for eschatological living, though less explicit in the text, also is effective (2:46–47).

The mention of *those who were being saved* alludes to Joel 2:32, quoted in Acts 2:21 (cf. also 2:40), connoting the eschatological remnant of Israel.⁵²⁵ Luke uses the term translated *added* both at the beginning (2:41) and conclusion (2:47) of this summary section, underlining the importance for him of the movement's growth (cf. again 5:14; 11:24).

3:1–10: POWER OF JESUS'S NAME

3:1–5:42 elaborates on the effective apostolic leadership in Jerusalem. Here the apostolic church grows and even challenges the municipal aristocracy (the political elite) by an alternative, divinely empowered vision of leadership for Israel (Luke 22:29–30). This section opens with a major public sign, and consequently an appeal to Israel to turn and submit to their rightful king. This leads to two escalating confrontations with Jerusalem's leaders. Sandwiched between the two confrontations is an account of a second community experience of the Spirit (analogous

⁵²² Luke finds earlier precedent as well, such as Joseph in Acts 7:10; Gen 39:4, 21; 50:4; cf. *Jub.* 39:4; 40:9; *T. Joseph* 11:6; 12:3.

⁵²³ So D. L. Balch, "ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ – Jesus as Founder of the Church in Luke-Acts: Form and Function," pages 139–88 in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 165; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.15.73.

⁵²⁴ The phrase "favor with the people" probably echoes esp. Exod 3:21; 11:3; 12:36.

⁵²⁵ With, e.g., Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 30.

to the Pentecost outpouring), including positive (Barnabas) and negative (Ananias and Sapphira) examples of sharing possessions, and a summary of apostolic signs.

The contrast between two kinds of leadership – one institutional and supported by Rome and hereditary wealth, the other charismatic and following Jesus’s example – is instructive. The contrast would be especially striking if Luke writes in a period when Jerusalem and its priestly aristocracy lay in shambles, whereas the movement founded by Jesus’s apostles has continued to spread.

The persecution of all the apostles in ch. 5 parallels the persecution of Peter and John in ch. 4. A century and even half a century ago most scholars viewed the repetition as due to Luke including divergent oral accounts of the same event as different events. Today most scholars find instead a deliberate literary pattern, an “echo effect” to reinforce the point.⁵²⁶ Here, as often, Luke’s valuable narrative patterning emerges.

Acts 2–3	Acts 3–4	Acts 5
Outpouring summary (2:41–47)	Outpouring summary (4:32–35)	Outpouring summary (5:11–16)
Preaching in temple (2:14–40)	Preaching in temple (3:12–26)	(Preaching in temple; 5:20, 25)
Activity in temple (summary, 2:46)	Preaching in temple (3:12–26)	Activity in temple (summary; 5:12)
Many converts (2:41)	Many converts (4:4)	Many converts (5:14)
Continuing apostolic miracles (2:43; 3:8)	Continuing apostolic miracles (3:8; probably 4:33)	Continuing apostolic miracles (5:15–16)
– (no recorded opposition from leaders)	Priests and Sadducees against apostles (4:1–2, 5–6)	High priest and Sadducees against apostles (5:17)
Favor with the people (2:47)	Favor with the people (4:21; cf. 4:4)	Favor with the people (5:26)

⁵²⁶ See esp. Spencer, *Acts*, 42–45.

The pattern is particularly evident in the trial accounts:

Acts 4	Acts 5
Apostles jailed overnight (4:3)	Apostles jailed overnight (5:18)
Apostles tried (4:5–7), including demand (4:7)	Apostles tried (5:21–41), including demand (5:28, 40)
Peter and colleague preach (4:8–12), including, Obey God, not people (4:19–20)	Peter and colleagues preach: Obey God, not people (5:29–32)
God raised Jesus, whom you crucified (4:10)	God raised Jesus, whom you crucified (5:30)
Jesus is the means of salvation (4:12)	Jesus is the savior (5:31)
Response of authorities and private dialogue among themselves (4:13–17)	Response of authorities and private dialogue among themselves (5:33–39)
Gag order (4:18)	Reminder of gag order (5:28); new gag order (5:40)
Threat of punishment (4:21)	Carrying out of punishment (5:40)
Apostles released (4:21)	Apostles released (5:40–41)
Prayer for events (4:23–30), including praise (4:24)	Rejoicing for events (5:41)
Continuing apostolic activity and revival (4:32–35)	Continuing apostolic activity (and presumably revival; 5:42)

Typically, reduplication of scenes elaborates and develops a pattern, later scenes recalling earlier ones but advancing the plot further.

Listing only parallels can, however, obscure the distinctions among the accounts, such as increasing intensity of persecution and the addition of other apostles. Apart from the fact that the apostles are arrested twice – which makes sense if they continued preaching after their first arrest – most of the parallels are due to Luke’s method of summarizing *continuing* activity rather than to parallel events. Nor do the patterns fall neatly into identically sequenced, set columns; the repetition is of various individual events, not of entire narrative sections. The clearest differences among the accounts particularly emphasize increasing intensity:

Acts 2	Acts 3–4	Acts 5
No persecution recorded (2:47)	Arrest (4:3) and warning (4:21)	Arrest (5:18), near execution (5:33), and beating (5:40)
–	–	Angel frees them (5:19)
–	Peter’s, “you be the judge” (4:19)	Greater confrontation (5:29, 32)

3:1–4:30 addresses the healing of the paralytic and its aftermath. 3:1–10 emphasizes the power of Jesus’s name; signs (by definition) draw attention for the gospel (3:11–26). In 3:11–26, the power of Jesus’s name demonstrates that God raised Jesus, Isaiah’s “servant” (3:13, 26; the *inclusio* suggests that this is the “controlling” title), the righteous sufferer (3:14), the promised ruler (3:15), the epitome of Israel’s prophetic leadership (3:22–23). The time of promise has come (3:24–25); as soon as Israel will accept Jesus as their rightful ruler (3:19, 26), the kingdom will be restored (3:19–26).

3:1–10 follows naturally from the preceding section, illustrating concretely prayer in the temple (2:47; 3:1), apostolic signs (2:43), and conversions (2:47; 4:4). Peter’s lack of silver (3:6) reinforces the picture of serving the Lord sacrificially in 2:44–45. The heart of the account, as demonstrated by the dialogues that follow (3:16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17–18, 30), is that healing occurs through Jesus’s “name” (3:6), which offers salvation and wholeness (2:21, 38). That is, Jesus remains active and works through those agents he has chosen and commissioned. This healing early in Peter’s ministry evokes Jesus early in his ministry healing a disabled man (Luke 5:17–26), thus linking the healing with Jesus’s power to forgive and save and a universal scope (Luke 5:24; Acts 4:9, 12). The parallels with the healing of a lame man in Acts 14 (see that passage) emphasize the pattern continuing in the wider global mission.

As in 3:1, Luke often emphasizes dramatic divine interventions during prayer times (10:3; Luke 1:10). Such special prayer times in Jerusalem corresponded to the morning and evening offerings (Exod 29:39–41; Num 28:4; cf. Ezra 9:5; Jdt 9:1); by this period, the latter was *at about three o’clock in the afternoon* (see Josephus, *Ant.* 14.65). In this case, the apostles were probably on their way to corporate prayer with other believers in the temple (2:46).

Jesus had advocated for (Luke 14:13, 21) and healed (Luke 7:22) those unable to walk; this pattern of healing continues here and with Philip (8:7) and Paul (14:8). But while believers prayed together daily in the temple (2:46–47), and this man was brought daily (3:2), it is only on this occasion, when the man requests alms from the apostles, that they address him.

Starting in the fifth century CE, many believed that the site for *the Beautiful Gate* was the Shushan Gate on the east side of the temple mount, but only those entering the temple from outside the city would use this gate. Much more often, modern scholars prefer as more probable (though not certain) the famous Nicanor Gate. Josephus speaks of the Corinthian bronze of a gate more beautiful than those covered with silver or gold (Josephus, *War* 5.201), and it was the largest of the gates (*War* 5.204).

Many scholars doubt that someone unable to walk was allowed to enter beyond that point, although this point is unclear. Biblical law, like many pagan priesthods, excluded the disabled only from the priesthood (Lev 21:18), although Qumran applied this law to restrict their presence in the community (1QSa 2.5–6).

The disabled and others forced to beg appeared at temples and other public places in Mediterranean cities; discrimination was common.⁵²⁷ The Old Testament strongly emphasized just treatment of the disabled (Lev 19:14; Deut 27:18), including the lame (Job 29:15). Nevertheless, some later teachers opined that, at least as a rule, one who encounters the lame should say, “Blessed be the righteous judge” (*t. Ber.* 6:3). Their healing is an eschatological gift announcing the arrival of the messianic era (Luke 7:22, recalling Isa 35:5–6, to which Luke also alludes in the “leaping” of Acts 3:8).

Jewish tradition stressed both charity and a high work ethic; most beggars genuinely had no alternative means of income. Even gentiles recognized the Jewish emphasis on charity (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.283). Luke often emphasizes the piety involved in almsgiving (Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 9:36; 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17).

Ancient Greek ethics demanded kindness toward beggars, but views of them were sometimes negative.⁵²⁸ Those unaccustomed to a lifestyle of begging considered it shameful or embarrassing.⁵²⁹ Nevertheless, beggars could not afford to be shy about their need; casting aside any semblance of honor, they had to beg boldly or stay needy (Homer, *Od.* 17.347, 578). Cynics sages were known for both begging and wit: when a stingy person was slow to respond to Diogenes's plea, he charged, “It's for food that I'm asking, not for funeral expenses” (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.56, LCL). To another, who dared Diogenes to persuade him, the Cynic replied that had he the power of persuasion, he would have persuaded the man to hang himself (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.59). One Cynic source advocated practicing begging from statues to accustom oneself to being turned down.⁵³⁰

The speaking part in Luke's early chapters belongs especially to Peter. John has few speaking parts in Acts; although he played an important role in the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:9), he was less prominent (and perhaps less

⁵²⁷ Even for a member of the elite, e.g., Nepos 17 (Agesilaus), 8.1; Justin, *Epit.* 6.2.4–5; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 1.10. Cf. also discussions of disability in C. R. Moss and J. Schipper, eds., *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁵²⁸ Probably esp. among the elite; see B. W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 75–80.

⁵²⁹ E.g., Musonius Rufus 11, p. 80.19, 21–23; Hermogenes, *Issues* 50.14–16; Luke 16:3; Sir 40:28–30.

⁵³⁰ Diogenes, *Ep.* 11; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.49.

vocal) than Peter.⁵³¹ Their lack of silver and gold (3:6a) fits Luke's distinctive emphasis (cf. 2:44–45), including in Jesus's instructions to his followers (Luke 9:2–6; 10:4, 9; 12:41–42). It also distinguishes them from magicians (cf. 8:20) and greedy charlatans (see comment on 20:33–35); people often respected sages who lived simply.⁵³²

The man is healed because of faith in Jesus's name (3:16). Peter expresses faith by commanding the healing and lifting the man up; apparently the healed man also expresses faith by recognizing what has happened and acting accordingly (3:8). Healing follows a direct command, fitting Jesus's teaching (Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6) and some OT models (2 Kgs 1:10; 2:14, 21–22, 24; 4:43; 5:10).

Nevertheless, these commands are effective only because Jesus's agents act within his purposes. Emphasis on Jesus's name recurs throughout this section (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17–18; cf. 4:30; 5:28, 40–41), as it did in the preceding context (2:21, 38). Acting by means of Jesus's name here means acting on his authorization (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 30; 16:18; cf. 19:13, 17). Analogously, “in God's name” could signify a representative acting on God's behalf (Exod 5:23; Deut 18:19–22; Jer 14:14–15), according to his command (Deut 18:5, 7), by his help (Ps 118:10–11; Prov 18:10), or using his name for a miraculous act (2 Kgs 2:24).⁵³³ Invoking Jesus's name may also implicitly call on Jesus (cf. invoking the divine name in Josh 10:12; 1 Chron 16:2; 1 Enoch 40:6).

Faithful use of Jesus's name, i.e., as his authorized agents (e.g., 16:18; cf. Luke 9:48; Mark 9:37; Matt 18:5; James 5:10), differs from magical manipulation (Acts 19:13–15; cf. 8:9–11; 13:8–11) or even the typical rituals of ancient public religion.⁵³⁴ Essentially Jesus continues to act through those who bear his name (Acts 1:1; 9:34); thus the credit belongs to him, not to his agents (3:12–16).

Although people especially emphasized home towns that were prominent (cf. 21:39), Jesus's followers in Acts are not ashamed that Jesus is a *Nazarene* (4:10; 10:38; 26:9; cf. 22:8; Luke 24:19).

⁵³¹ Even in the Fourth Gospel, the beloved disciple (who may be connected with John; see the argument in Keener, *John*, 84–91) has few speaking parts, despite observing and even participating in much of the action (Jn 13:25; 21:7; cf. 21:20).

⁵³² E.g., Xenophon, *Oec.* 2.2–4; Socrates, *Ep.* 6; Plutarch, *Aristides* 25.3, 5; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621.

⁵³³ For the general idiom of acting in another's name, cf., e.g., 1 Sam 25:9; Esther 2:22; 3:12; 8:8.

⁵³⁴ Rituals' efficacy might depend on their precise performance (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 16.3.1).

As in 2:6–8 and often in Acts, so here signs draw attention to the message to be proclaimed (see, e.g., 4:29–30; 14:3). Miracle accounts often emphasize demonstrations of the miracle; Luke thus mentions “walking” four times in 3:6–8 and again in 3:12. His references to healed persons *leaping* (3:8; 14:10; elsewhere rare in the NT) evoke the messianic era promised in Isa 35:6 (see already Luke 7:22), preparing for Peter’s proclamation (Acts 3:24).

Solomon’s Portico (3:11; cf. John 10:23), the temple’s eastern colonnade (a long outdoor hallway supported by pillars), became a favorite place for believers to gather (5:12). Because the eastern colonnade’s masonry was pre-Herodian, people assumed that it derived from the time of Solomon (Josephus, *War* 5.184–85; *Ant.* 15.397–400; 20.221), the temple’s original builder (Acts 7:47). That the people rightly *ran together* here (cf. Mark 6:33) contrasts with the people later running together against Paul in Acts 21:30.

3:12–26: INVITING ISRAEL’S REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

Throughout Acts, signs are the most abundant means of drawing attention to the gospel (e.g., 4:30; 5:12–14; 6:8; 8:6; 14:3, 10–17; 15:12; 19:11–12; 28:8–9), hence are inseparable from proclamation. With the audience’s attention secured by the sign in 3:1–11, Peter preaches Christ as God’s servant (3:13–14, 26; cf. 4:27, 30; 8:32–33), the promised prophet (3:22–23), and the agent of promised blessing (3:25–26). This passage recognizes that God will ultimately bless gentiles too (3:25–26), but offers a restoration of Israel’s kingdom (cf. 1:6) if Israel, which has rejected its king, will now turn and receive him (3:19–21, 26).

In 3:12–26, Luke probably summarizes (cf. 2:40) some relevant samples of (sometimes distinctively) early apostolic christological exegesis, presumably elaborating the scriptural apologetic implied in Luke 24:44. As in Acts 2, notable divine activity occasions the preaching (2:15–16; 3:12), and Peter underlines his people’s or their leaders’ rejection of their rightful ruler (2:23; 3:13–14; 4:10) in contrast to God raising him (2:24; 3:15; 4:10), and the offer of forgiveness (2:38; 3:19), following Jesus’s instructions (cf. Luke 24:46–48). In each case, the bulk of the message argues for Jesus’s identity and Israel’s proper response.

Peter emphasizes that the blessings to Israel (3:26) promised to patriarchs and prophets are now available through the Messiah. Because Israel has rejected its king, however, it must now repent and embrace him, an

action that will usher in the eschatological era (cf. similarly probably Luke 1:16–17; Matt 23:39; Rom 11:12, 15, 23–32; perhaps Rev 11:13; cf. Hos 14:1–7). The delay in obedience, meanwhile, leads to a delay of the promised end, providing the time in which the gentile mission will be carried out (cf. similarly Rom 11:11, 25).

Nevertheless, though Jesus is an authority (3:15) and has already been introduced as king (2:36), this speech's distinctive christological focus lies on Jesus as the "servant," as indicated by the *inclusio* of 3:13 and 26. God glorifying his servant (3:13; cf. Isa 52:13) and the title "righteous one" (Acts 3:14; 7:52; Isa 53:11) recall Isaiah's "servant."

Luke is aware that the title "servant" applies to Israel (Luke 1:54), as well as to Jesus's agents (implicitly, Acts 13:47). In Isaiah, the "servant" is clearly Israel (Isa 41:8; 44:1, 21; 49:3), but Israel fails to fulfill the servant calling (42:18–19), and one within Israel brings the rest of Israel back to God (49:5–7; 53:5–6). Although Israel suffers justly for its sins (40:2), this remnant "servant" suffers in Israel's place, though innocent (53:4–12, especially 53:9).

After Jesus's resurrection, his followers naturally found him in Isaiah's depiction of God's perfect servant, who would both save Israel and bring light to the gentiles (42:6; 49:6; 52:15). Some ancient Jewish traditions, especially in some Targums, also understood Isaiah's servant messianically, but these traditions may be later than the first century. In Acts 3:14, Jesus is further the holy (Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 4:27; cf. 2:27; 13:35) and righteous (7:52; 22:14) one; the latter point fits Luke's emphasis on Jesus's innocence (Luke's 23:4, 13–15, 22, 40, 47; cf. Wis 2:12–20).

Peter notes Pilate's desire to release Jesus (3:13; Luke 23:16, 20, 22), not to absolve Pilate from guilt (cf. 23:25; Acts 4:27) but to challenge his own people's responsibility (3:13–15; cf. 1 Thess 2:15).⁵³⁵ Their preference for a murderer (Acts 3:14) recalls Luke 23:18–19. The contrasts in Acts 3:14–15 highlight their guilt: they preferred a murderer and so killed the prince of life, whom God restored to life. Greeks used the title *prince* (3:15; 5:31; translated "pioneer" in Heb 2:10; 12:2) for, e.g., founders of cities; the LXX applies it to respected leaders. Jesus is both the founding leader and the forerunner concerning resurrection life.

Luke highlights the results of faith in Jesus's name. He elsewhere often associates faith with miracles (Luke 5:20; 7:9; 8:25, 48, 50; 17:6, 19; 18:42) and

⁵³⁵ That Pilate examined Jesus is surely historical (cf. also Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44); only the governor could order crucifixion.

expected those who received revelation to respond in faith (Luke 1:20, 45; 24:25; cf. 8:12–13).

After confronting his audience with the full measure of their corporate guilt, Peter more gently points out their ignorance and God's plan in allowing Jesus's crucifixion. Ignorance was widely understood as reducing guilt (cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 14:17; cf. 17:23, 30), though leaders, who knew Scripture, remained more culpable (cf. Luke 11:52; Acts 13:27).⁵³⁶ Peter further softens the charge by showing that Jesus died according to God's plan (cf. 2:23; Gen 45:5), which had long included rejected deliverers (Acts 7:9, 27–28, 35).

If Jesus's coming fulfilled the prophetic promises (3:18), then God's eschatological blessing was now available to Israel (3:19–21). Israel's repentance (cf. calls to turn to God in the biblical prophets; e.g., Isa 6:10; 10:21; Jer 3:7; 4:1; Hos 14:1–2; Joel 2:12–13; Zech 1:3–4; Mal 3:7) would precipitate the Lord's restoration of Israel (e.g., Ezek 36:24–28; Hos 14:1–7; Joel 2:12–32).⁵³⁷ Some Jewish teachers held that the end would come at a fixed time (e.g., 4 *Ezra* 7:74; Acts 1:7), whereas others believed that Israel's repentance would usher it in (3:19–20).⁵³⁸

That Jesus *must remain in heaven* until the period of restoration echoes Psalm 110:1 (as in Acts 2:34–35). The *universal restoration* includes renewed heavens and earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22),⁵³⁹ though its focus may be, as more pervasively in *his holy prophets*, the restoration of God's people (see Acts 1:6; Isa 65:18; Amos 9:14; Ezek 39:25).

Jesus is not only the Isaian servant (Acts 3:13, 26) but also the promised *prophet like Moses* (3:21–22; cf. 7:37; Deut 18:15–19; 1QS 9.10–11; 4Q175 1.5–8). Luke might evoke the command to *listen to that prophet* already in Luke 9:35, probably as an allusion to Deut 18:15.⁵⁴⁰ That the Lord would *raise up* this prophet (Acts 3:22) also invited a wordplay with the

⁵³⁶ Biblical law specifically provided atonement esp. for sins done in ignorance (Lev 4:2–3, 22–23, 27–28; 5:15–19; 22:14; Num 15:22–31; 35:11, 15). Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 13:7; Philo, *Unchangeable* 134; *LAB* 22:6; *m. Hor.* 1:1; *t. Sabb.* 8:5; *Sipre Deut.* 155.1.1.

⁵³⁷ Cf. *Jub.* 1:15–18; 23:26–27; *Sipre Deut.* 43.16.3.

⁵³⁸ See diverse views in *b. Sanh.* 97a–98b.

⁵³⁹ See also *Jub.* 1:29; 4:26; 1 *En.* 45:4–5; 72:1; 91:16; *Sib. Or.* 5.211–12; *LAB* 3:10; 2 *Bar.* 32:6, 44:12, 57:2; 2 *Pet* 3:13; *Rev* 21:1. In context, it cannot designate the salvation of all individuals, even within Israel (3:23; cf. 2:35).

⁵⁴⁰ Still, Luke elsewhere also emphasizes hearing Jesus (cf., e.g., Luke 5:1, 15; 6:18, 47, 49; 8:8, 10, 18, 21; 10:16, 24, 39).

resurrection (cf. 2:24, 32; esp. 3:26; 13:33–34). The description of judgment for those who reject Jesus (3:23) blends Deut 18:19 with Lev 23:29, probably linking Jesus also with the day of atonement.

By citing “all” the prophets (Acts 3:24), Peter’s speech develops the claim of 3:21 hyperbolically, a technique familiar in the rhetoric of both the Greco-Roman world and traditional Jewish sages. Peter may include Samuel’s prophecies about David’s kingdom, fulfilled par excellence in the messianic son of David (cf. Acts 1:16; 2:25–36; 4:25; 13:33–37; 15:16). Later teachers often claimed that the prophets prophesied for the end of the age and the messianic era.⁵⁴¹ Using hyperbole that exceeds Luke’s here, a later rabbi could even claim that all the prophets prophesied *only* about the messianic era⁵⁴² – though this same rabbi also reportedly claimed that “All the prophets prophesied only for repentant sinners or the like.”⁵⁴³ (Sages could also claim that God spoke to all the prophets only because of Israel or concerning Jerusalem.)⁵⁴⁴ *These days* of which they prophesied refer to the messianic era, the era of the kingdom’s restoration to Israel, a subject indeed of concern to most of the biblical prophets.

God planned to bless all nations through Abraham’s seed (3:25; see, repeatedly, Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14), but the blessing was offered to Israel first of all (Acts 3:26). Still, Israel’s special place of privilege (3:25) would be actualized only by each hearer turning from sin (3:26). *Descendants of the prophets* (Acts 3:25) indicates those for whom the prophets prophesied (3:18, 21, 24), but may also recall Luke 11:47–48: they will act either as descendants of the prophets (Luke 6:23, 26; 10:24; Acts 2:17–18) or of their killers (Luke 11:47–50; 13:34; Acts 7:52). *Descendants of the covenant* applied to the Jewish people (*Ps. Sol.* 17:15) or the righteous among them (1QM 17.8; 4Q501 f1.2; 4Q503 7–9.3), but for Luke’s audience the covenant also recalls Abraham (cf. 7:8, 17; Luke 1:55, 72–73; 13:16; 19:9), whose children they are (Acts 3:25).

⁵⁴¹ E.g., *b. Sabb.* 63a; *Tg. Jon.* on 2 Sam 23:1, 3; *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Kgs 5:13.

⁵⁴² *B. Ber.* 34b; *Sanh.* 99a; *Sabb.* 63a.

⁵⁴³ *B. Sanh.* 99a (Soncino tr., 671); *Ber.* 34b.

⁵⁴⁴ *Mek. Pisha* 1.135ff., 166; *Gen. Rab.* 82:2. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:686, thinks that later rabbis’ messianic midrashim apply a christocentric hermeneutic similar to that he finds in the Gospels.

4:1–7: THE AUTHORITIES ARREST GOD'S SERVANTS

In Acts 4:1–22, Christ's authority through his apostles exposes the spiritual powerlessness of worldly status. Conflict dominates the section, in which the apostles (4:8–12, 19–20) twice respond to the rulers (4:1–7, 13–18). The current leadership of Israel (4:1–3) participated in killing their rival, God's appointed ruler (3:15, 17). Now they oppose Peter's summons to Israel to repent (3:12–26), objecting to the apostles' eschatology (4:2) even if they cannot contravene their miracle (4:14). Luke attributes their hostility also to jealousy (5:17) of those whose God-ordained leadership threatened the elite's power base (cf. Luke 20:14).⁵⁴⁵

Just as Jesus's words in Nazareth were first well-received (Luke 4:20, 22), so were Peter's (Acts 2:37, 41, 47; 4:4); but in both cases proclamation ultimately led to persecution (Luke 4:28–29; Acts 4:1–2). Many early Christians experienced persecution (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13, 23; Phil 3:6; 1 Thess 2:14–16); Luke presents it (as do some other writers, e.g., 2 Tim 3:12) as characteristic of the Christian life (Luke 6:23; Acts 14:22).

The authorities had not moved against Jesus's followers the way they had moved against those of Theudas, the Samaritan prophet or the Egyptian prophet (cf. 5:36–37; 21:38; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.98; *War* 2.260, 263). Jesus's disciples had not taken up arms or spoken about overthrowing anyone. Nevertheless, confrontation was inevitable; the disciples' master, Jesus, had confronted the municipal aristocracy (Luke 19:45–48; 20:19), who were among his most critical enemies (19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2, 4, 52, 66; 23:4, 10; 24:20).

A Closer Look: The Power Groups in 4:1, 5–6

Most minority Jewish sects viewed the Sadducean elite (the dominant voice in the Sanhedrin) as Rome's political lackeys (cf. Acts 4:25–29); like many other political elites, the Sadducees repressed their competition.⁵⁴⁶ Some accused the priesthood of being corrupt or poor stewards.⁵⁴⁷ Josephus, himself a priestly aristocrat, has a far more positive view of Jerusalem's

⁵⁴⁵ Some other Jewish groups, such as the one represented in the Qumran sectarian texts, also claimed to represent the true, God-ordained leadership for Israel, though they did not survive.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. observations about political injustice in González, *Acts*, 86–87, on Acts 5:17–40.

⁵⁴⁷ 1QpHab 9.4–7; 4QpNah 1.11; 4Q387 f3.4–7; Josephus, *War* 13.256; 2 Bar. 10:18. For the Wicked (high) Priest, see 1QpHab 1.13; 8.8–12; 9.9; 11.4–6; 12.2–8; 4Q163 f30.3; 4Q171 f3.10.4.8. For other corrupt priests in antiquity, see, e.g., Plutarch, *Lys.* 26.1–3.

aristocracy than Luke does (see, e.g., *Ag. Ap.* 2.185). But even Josephus testifies to the corruption and abuse of power that existed among the high priestly family and some other leading families, having experienced it himself (e.g., *Life* 216). Eventually the elite priests became so corrupt that they seized the tithes belonging to the poorer priests, allegedly leading many to starve (*Ant.* 20.181); when another aristocratic priest was seizing their tithes (in 20.206), his bold servants were beating those who refused to comply.

More confrontational than Pharisees or Essenes in this period, the apostles openly challenge the municipal aristocracy's corruption and abuse of power (4:10–11, 19; cf. 2:23; 3:13–15), like biblical prophets challenging rulers (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:2; 14:7–11; 17:1; 21:21–24; 2 Kgs 21:10–15). The true king is ready to return and rule Israel if the people are ready to receive him (Acts 3:19–23). Given the people's response (4:4; 21:20), Luke may suggest that it was the corrupt rulers who prevented Jesus from being accepted by his people (cf. Luke 22:66; 23:4, 10, 13; Acts 13:27–28).⁵⁴⁸ Such rulers would view the apostles' public condemnation of their participation in the promised Messiah's judicial murder as shaming them and undermining their moral authority (5:28).

Jewish high priests held considerable political authority,⁵⁴⁹ recognized even among gentiles (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.5–6). Contrary to Israelite law, however, Roman officials freely gave and revoked this office (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.26, 95).

The captain of the temple (4:1) was a high officer who on occasion even rose to the office of high priest. He was presumably involved in Jesus's arrest (Luke 22:4, 52). Josephus uses the same title for him as Luke (*Ant.* 20.131; *War.* 6.294; Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26). Later rabbis portrayed some who filled this priestly office as wise scribes,⁵⁵⁰ but they also reported that an officer who filled this office in Jerusalem's final generation was extremely harsh even with his own temple guards.⁵⁵¹ One who filled this office close to (but slightly later than) our period is Ananus (*Ant.* 20.131), apparently

⁵⁴⁸ For Sadducean conflict with Jesus on the historical level, see, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 286; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 290–94, 310–13, 316–17; also, if authentic, the relevant line in Josephus, *Ant.* 18.64.

⁵⁴⁹ E. M. Smallwood, "High Priests and Politics in Roman Palestine," *JTS* 13 (1962): 14–34.

⁵⁵⁰ E.g., Hanina sagan of the priests, *m. Pesah.* 1:6; *Seqal.* 4:4; 6:1; 'Ed. 2:1–3; *Abot* 3:2; *Zebah.* 9:3; 12:4; *Menah.* 10:1; *Neg.* 1:4; *Parah* 3:1. He might be the Ananias of Josephus, *Ant.* 20.131.

⁵⁵¹ *M. Mid.* 1:2; *b. Tamid* 27b–28a.

son of the high priest Ananias (*War* 2.243); he later became high priest himself (*Ant.* 20.197) and executed James the Lord's brother (*Ant.* 20.199–200). Whoever currently filled this high office was undoubtedly a relative of the high priest (cf., e.g., *Ant.* 20.208; *War* 2.409).

The Sanhedrin maintained some police power, which the Romans tolerated as in other municipal aristocracies. Ancient temples typically had watchmen and guards.⁵⁵² Jerusalem's temple guards were Levites who functioned as gatekeepers (2 Chron 8:14; cf. Acts 21:30).⁵⁵³

Nearly all *Sadducees* belonged to the aristocracy, and in this period they apparently dominated the Sanhedrin.⁵⁵⁴ Luke shows that they are the circle around the high priests (5:17), hence comprise a significant part of the ruling assembly (4:5, 15; cf. 23:6). They were probably descended from the wealthy priests who had remained loyal to the Zadokite line during the Maccabean era, returning to a position of power under the Romans.⁵⁵⁵

Sadducees ignored Pharisaic traditions (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.16), but popular pressure may have often compelled them to follow Pharisaic rules in the temple.⁵⁵⁶ Nevertheless, powerful Pharisees and others had to work alongside them before 70.

Luke's reference to *rulers, elders, and scribes* (4:5) might ominously evoke roughly these groups' role (if Luke intends *rulers* as the elite priests) in Jesus's execution (Luke 9:22; 22:66; cf. 20:1; 22:52; Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 23:14; 25:15). Whereas Jesus's disciples, like typical disciples, were probably in their teens⁵⁵⁷ or (e.g., for Peter, who is married; Luke 4:38) early twenties, *elders* (cf. also comment on 14:23) evokes the respect typical for the aged. Josephus also portrays elders ruling in Israel,⁵⁵⁸ and speaks of a *gerousia*, a ruling council of elders, some twenty-nine times. This Jewish usage reflects wider Mediterranean usage, where a *gerousia* could also be linked with a "sanhedrin."⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵² E.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.43.94; 2.4.44.96.

⁵⁵³ See Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.119; *War* 6.293; Safrai, "Temple," 872–73.

⁵⁵⁴ See Sanders, *Judaism*, 318, 332.

⁵⁵⁵ See G. Baumbach, "Das Sadduzäerverständnis bei Josephus Flavius und im Neuen Testament," *Kairos* 13 (1, 1971): 17–37.

⁵⁵⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.15, 17; *t. Yoma* 1:8.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf., e.g., Josephus, *Life* 10; *m. Abot* 5:21; Eunapius, *Lives* 493.

⁵⁵⁸ E.g., *War* 2.267, 571; *Ant.* 7.26, 28, 41, 78; *Ant.* 8.99; 12.406; 13.124). These could be leaders in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 11.306) or of the tribes (*Ant.* 12.39, 56–57, 86–87, 91, 101).

⁵⁵⁹ E.g., *IGRR* 4.836.8 (*BDAG*); cf. other gentile examples in e.g., Diodorus Siculus 14.113.7–8; *SIG*³ 1112.1–2 (*BDAG*).

Although the term *scribes* can refer to anything from rudimentary village transcriptionists to officials such as town clerks, the NT usually applies the title to highly educated Torah scholars (cf. Ezra 7:10–11; 2 Macc 6:18). Many of the scribes may have been priests,⁵⁶⁰ who may have been better equipped financially to pursue such training.⁵⁶¹ Luke expects some of the scribes to be Pharisees (Acts 23:9, referring to the Sanhedrin; Luke 5:30) and sometimes portrays them as acting in concert (Luke 5:21; 6:7; 11:53; 15:2), but he also recognizes a distinction (11:45).

Together these groups – ruling priests, elders, and scribes – comprise the Sanhedrin, or *council* (4:15). This council of aristocrats constituted Jerusalem's municipal and regional senate,⁵⁶² with perhaps an average of roughly seventy members.⁵⁶³ Josephus's first-century portrait of the Sanhedrin is quite close to that of the Gospels and Acts.⁵⁶⁴ Although Rome held authority over the Sanhedrin, it seems to have supervised them closely primarily in the wake of publicly scandalous abuses (as in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.201–3). Before Herod came to power the Jerusalem Sanhedrin exercised significant authority (*Ant.* 14.177); Herod, being as vicious as he was politically astute, reportedly executed many of its members, whom he replaced with his political lackeys (*Ant.* 14.175), afterward calling his own councils as needed (*Ant.* 16.357, 360; 17.46). After appointment by Herod the Great, its membership was probably self-selecting and largely hereditary, most commonly associated with traditional aristocratic priestly families. They expected to be able to approve major actions (*Life* 309).

Luke writes as if his audience may be familiar with the officials he lists; this is at least the case regarding Annas and Caiaphas, whom he earlier introduced (Luke 3:2). *Annas* (a name common in Judea) is Ananus I, son of Seth, who held the highest office from 6 to 15 CE (cf. *Ant.* 18.26); five of his sons as well as his son-in-law Joseph Caiaphas became high priests after

⁵⁶⁰ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 80; idem, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 170–71; for priests as teachers, cf. Ezek 44:23; Mal 2:7; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.395. Cf. scribes of the temple in Josephus, *Ant.* 11.128; 12.142.

⁵⁶¹ The wealthier priests (cf. Josephus, *Life* 63; *Ant.* 20.213), not the poorer ones (as in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.207).

⁵⁶² The Greek term *sunedrion* applies even to Rome's senate (although the title *boulê* was more common); see, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 40.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.70.5; 6.30.2; 6.81.1; 6.85.2; 8.69.2; 9.32.5; 10.2.6; 12.1.14.

⁵⁶³ Later rabbis counted seventy-one (*m. Sanh.* 1:6; cf. later *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Ex 15:27). Jewish councils of seventy (Josephus, *War* 2.570; 4.336; *Life* 79) probably follow biblical models (Exod 24:9; Num 11:16, 24–25; Ezek 8:11).

⁵⁶⁴ See R. E. Brown, *Death*, 342–43; cf. Sanders, *Figure*, 484–87; L. L. Grabbe, “Sanhedrin, Sanhedriyyot, or Mere Invention?” *JSJ* 39 (1, 2008): 1–19.

him (*Ant.* 18.95; 20.198). Rome might change the highest official, but often preferred to retain the hereditary dynasty in power.

Caiaphas, not Annas, was officially high priest in this period (cf. John 18:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35, 95), but Luke elsewhere attributes high priestly authority to both (Luke 3:2). This observation fits the likelihood, given the continuing dynasty over whom Annas reigned as *paterfamilias*, that he continued to exercise considerable influence after Caiaphas his son-in-law assumed office.⁵⁶⁵ Former high priests might also retain the title (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.205).⁵⁶⁶ More importantly, Luke often employs the designation “high priests” in the plural, for all the leading priests (Luke 9:22; 19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2, 4, 52, 66; 23:4, 10, 13; 24:20; Acts 4:23; 5:24; 9:14, 21; 22:30; 23:14; 25:2, 15; 26:10, 12); this usage appears in the adjective *high priestly* in 4:6 itself. This usage, apparently widespread by this period, appears even more frequently in Josephus than in Luke.⁵⁶⁷

Hebrew names such as “John” and “Jonathan” were not unusual; “Alexander” is a good Greek name, rare among Palestinian Jewish peasants but common among Jerusalem aristocrats and in the Diaspora.^{568 ****}

In Acts 4:2, the Sadducees, who reject the resurrection (Luke 20:27; Acts 23:8), are threatened by the proclamation that resurrection has in fact happened – in the person of an enemy whose death they helped to engineer. Their denial of the hope of bodily resurrection (Dan 12:2) was well-known;⁵⁶⁹ their detractors associated such a denial with wickedness.⁵⁷⁰ Their conflicts with Pharisaic supporters of resurrection hope rarely grew violent, but the apostles preach not a theoretical hope for the future but solid evidence from recent history.

The authorities arrest Peter and John in the *evening* (4:3). This means that if the apostles came to the temple for the late afternoon prayer about 3 p.m. (Acts 3:1), they preached for about three hours. Legal hearings, like

⁵⁶⁵ As is widely acknowledged; see, e.g., Haenchen, *Acts*, 216.

⁵⁶⁶ The office was lifelong in biblical law, and Roman officials retained titles of past offices they had filled (L. R. Taylor, “The Asiarchs,” 5:256–62 in Foakes-Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings*, 258).

⁵⁶⁷ More than seventy times (e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.243, 316, 320, 342; 410–11; 4.151, 315; *Life* 197); cf. also 193.34.21QM 2.1; 4Q494 fr.4; Sanders, *Figure*, 327–32.

⁵⁶⁸ M. H. Williams, “Names,” 96–97. See, e.g. (in either gender), *CJJ* 1:lxvii; 1:13, §8; 1:59, §85; 1:102, §144; 1:149, §210; 1:157, §219; 1:288, §370; 1:436, §606; 2:27, §764; 2:249, §1217; 2:274, §1284; *CPJ* 1:xix; 3:168–69.

⁵⁶⁹ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.16; *War* 2.164–65; *Ab. R. Nat.* 5 A. Roman officials retained titles of past offices they had filled (Taylor, “Asiarchs,” 258).

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Wis 2:1–24; *Ab. R. Nat.* 5 A; *Tg. Neof.* 1 on Gen 4:8; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Gen 4:8.

virtually all other public activities, usually ended at sundown and reconvened at daybreak.⁵⁷¹ The apostles' confinement overnight is the first of many detentions in Acts (5:18–19; 8:3; 12:4–6; 16:23–27; 22:4; 24:27; 26:10), fulfilling Jesus's promise in Luke 21:12, and fulfilling a previously abandoned part of Peter's commitment in 22:33.

Their arrest does not, however, hinder the church's growth (4:4; cf. 2:41; 21:20). Scholars debate whether the number five thousand here (cf. Luke 9:14) includes Jerusalem residents already converted in 2:41 or refers exclusively to new converts; in either case, Luke explicitly limits the number here (as often in ancient countings) to "men" (*pace* the NRSV), so the full figure is higher.

The authorities' leading question (cf. 8:34), resembles the question of Jesus's authority in Luke 20:2, except in this case the disciples' answer is not evasive (contrast Luke 20:3–4). On the "name," see comment on Acts 3:6.

4:8–12: SALVATION IN JESUS'S NAME

Fulfilling Jesus's promise (Luke 21:15; cf. 12:11–12), the Spirit that inspires prophetic speech (2:17–18) empowers Peter's *boldness* (4:8, 13; cf. 13:9), quite in contrast to Peter's earlier timidity (Luke 22:57–62).⁵⁷² Despite Peter's courteous and customary use of a title for these officials (4:8), he confronts them with the same message he preached publicly (4:10).

Ancient ideology required gratitude for benefactions (*good deed* in 4:9 is the term for benefaction); to reward benefaction with contempt or accusations was considered reprehensible (cf. 10:38–39; 24:17).⁵⁷³ Ancient rhetoric often called benefactors also "saviors,"⁵⁷⁴ explaining Peter's ready

⁵⁷¹ See, e.g., Plutarch, *Cic.* 15.3; 19.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.11.16, 18; 4.9.9; Aulus Gellius 14.7.8; cf. Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66 (though contrast Mark 14:53; Luke 22:54). So also senate meetings (Cicero, *Fam.* 1.2.4; Plutarch, *Cic.* 15.3; 19.1).

⁵⁷² One may also note that such empowerments of the Spirit need not be limited to one or two occasions; cf. Peter in Acts 2:4; 4:31, 33; also Paul in 9:17; 13:9. The Spirit enables conflict with spiritual challengers also in Acts 13:9; Luke 3:22; 4:1–2, 13–14.

⁵⁷³ In rhetoric, see *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1444b.35–1445a.26; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.3.105; examples in Lucian, *Peregr.* 19; Apuleius, *Apol.* 103; 2 Macc 4:2. Many earlier priestly leaders in Jerusalem had functioned as civic benefactors (see G. Gardner, "Jewish Leadership and Hellenistic Civic Benefaction in the Second Century B.C.E.," *JBL* 126 [2, 2007]: 327–43). Human benefaction was typically financial, but Peter had provided a better form (Acts 3:2–3, 6).

⁵⁷⁴ See, e.g., P. Fouad 8; Philo, *Flacc.* 74, 126; *Embassy* 22; Josephus, *War* 1.530; 3.459; 4.146; 7.71; *Ant.* 12.261; *Life* 244, 259. They apply to Israel's God in Philo, *Creation* 169; *Alleg.* 2.56; *Sobr.* 55; *Prelim. St.* 171; *Spec. Laws* 1.272.

transition in 4:9 from a *good deed* (*euergesia*, benefaction) to one being *healed* (*sesôtai*, saved). Jesus's name saves, not only physically but spiritually (4:9–12; cf. 2:21, 38; 3:6, 16). Peter plays on the semantic range of the Greek term *sôzô*: the name of Jesus that alone “saved” this man from sickness (4:9) was the only means for anyone’s “salvation” (4:12); only Jesus’s authority and power brought either kind of God-given salvation.⁵⁷⁵ The verb applies to healing in Luke 8:36, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:42; Acts 14:9,⁵⁷⁶ and to acquiring eternal life in Luke 9:24; 13:23; 18:26; Acts 2:21, 40, 47; 11:14; 15:1, 11; 16:31. Even the man’s *good health* in Acts 4:10 reinforces the analogy, since many used physical health as an analogy for moral or spiritual health.⁵⁷⁷ Polytheists resented the monotheistic exclusivism of Jews; early Christians embraced a still more publicly offensive, exclusive salvific demand (e.g., 4:12; John 14:6).⁵⁷⁸

Ancient speakers often prepared their hearers for a shocking statement, a role that Peter’s *Let it be known to you* may fill (cf. 2:14, 36; 13:38; 28:28). Ancient legal rhetoric often returned charges against accusers (though not against judges); unintimidated by the political power arrayed before him, Peter implies that the *real* criminals are these leaders who executed the Messiah (4:10). Those who narrated the trials of virtuous persons such as Socrates sometimes portrayed the trial as revealing that the accusers in reality were accusing themselves, whereas Socrates was being vindicated (Maximus of Tyre 3.8).

The elite unjustly arranged Jesus’s death, but God reversed their unjust verdict by raising him (4:10). Peter interprets this reversal as fulfilling a principle of Scripture (4:11; Ps 118:22) learned from Jesus himself (Luke 20:17).⁵⁷⁹ Scholars have debated whether reference is to the cornerstone or to the topstone (a final stone that held the others in place); in either case,

⁵⁷⁵ “Under heaven” was a common OT expression and might here evoke all peoples under heaven experiencing God’s reign (Dan 7:27).

⁵⁷⁶ For pagan healing, cf. Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 375.14.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf., e.g., Plato, *Rep.* 4.444E; Diogenes Laertius 10.138; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.8.29; for moralists as physicians for the soul, cf. Anacharsis, *Ep.* 9; Crates, *Ep.* 17; Diogenes, *Ep.* 49; Lucian, *Demonax* 7; Diogenes Laertius 2.70; 6.1.4; 6.2.30; Livy 42.40.3; Diodorus Siculus 12.13.4; Philo, *Good Person* 12.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. *Apocrit.* 4.20–23; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.11.12–13. Still, different Greek philosophic sects considered only their own ways as fully true (e.g., Lucian, *Hermot.* 14); radical Jewish sects such as the Qumran sectarians viewed the rest of Israel as apostate. Luke also allows for some who are “close” to the kingdom (Acts 10:4, 31; 15:9; cf. Mark 12:34; Luke 10:28, 37).

⁵⁷⁹ Supporting that saying’s authenticity in the gospel tradition is its context in the Hallel (Ps 113–118), used at Passover season.

passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls lead us to surmise that Peter's hearers probably recognized that he was comparing the elect community to a temple.⁵⁸⁰ Such a challenge could enrage those who viewed themselves as guardians of the one God's exclusive physical temple.

4:13–22: CONFOUNDING THE AUTHORITIES

Acts 4:13–22 contrasts the politically cautious elite with the courageous boldness of apostles carrying on Jesus's ministry (i.e., in his name) by signs (cf. 4:29–30). This paragraph opens and closes with the elite confounded by a public miracle they cannot deny (4:14, 21–22), and its heart is the insistence on speaking the truth of what the apostles know firsthand (4:19–20).

Ancient elites despised demagogues popular with the common people, but they had to oppose them carefully (cf. here Luke 20:5–7). Philosophers, moralists, and other writers regularly praised *boldness* (Greek *parrêsia*; 4:13; cf. 2:29), open, frank speech.⁵⁸¹ They attributed this frank speech to particularly respected philosophers who were committed to truth rather than others' opinion. Obeying God rather than people, as in 4:19 and 5:29, evokes Plato's Socrates (*Apol.* 29D),⁵⁸² though the apostles likelier would have thought of OT prophets (e.g., 1 Sam 13:13–14; 2 Sam 12:1–15; 1 Kgs 13:1–3; 2 Chron 24:20; Jer 20:3–6; 26:20; Dan 3:16–18; 6:10). Thinkers also recognized, however, that confronting rulers could produce persecution.⁵⁸³ Jewish stories highlighted the faithful boldness and civil disobedience of martyrs (2 Macc 7:2; 4 Macc 5:29; 10:5), as well as the authorities' amazement (4 Macc 17:16), as here (Acts 4:13).

Language used for the Galileans' lack of education (4:13) was sometimes used relative to the matters in question, here in contrast to the scribes or perhaps those with (like some of their elite Jerusalem critics) rhetorical training.⁵⁸⁴ What they learned from Jesus, however, more than

⁵⁸⁰ See 1QS 8.5, 8–9; 9.6; CD 2.10, 13. Cf. Ps 118:19–20, 27.

⁵⁸¹ E.g., Publilius Syrus 10; Philodemus, *Frank Criticism* passim, esp. frg. 1; Musonius Rufus 9, p. 74.10–11; Plutarch, *Praising* 6, *Mor.* 541D; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.3.5; Lucian, *Fisherman* 3, 17; *Posts* 4; *Demonax* 11; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.69.

⁵⁸² Cf. disobedience in Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.4.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 80.6–7; cf. Socrates's model in Acts 17:19.

⁵⁸³ Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.13; Philodemus, *Crit.* 23b–24a; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.317–18, 321–22, 325.

⁵⁸⁴ For those lacking rhetorical proficiency, cf. 2 Cor 11:6; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.271.

compensated for any lack of more formal training;⁵⁸⁵ disciples' behavior reflected on their teachers.⁵⁸⁶ Human status would be an issue for these elite judges: Upper classes regularly despised demagogues and their appeals to the unlearned, hence easily swayed, masses.⁵⁸⁷ Just as some trained philosophers despised the philosophically uninformed masses,⁵⁸⁸ many sages despised those ignorant of the Torah;⁵⁸⁹ great social distance existed between elite interpreters and commoners.⁵⁹⁰

As other wise or witty sages in antiquity often silenced questioners, so here the “uneducated” apostles leave their elite questioners nothing to say (4:14; cf. Luke 20:26, 40), especially because of public opinion (19:48; 20:5–7, 19). This fulfills Jesus's promise (Luke 12:11–12; 21:15; cf. Acts 6:10).

Who could be Luke's ultimate source for the closed discussion in 4:16–17? Leaks sometimes occurred from closed meetings of Roman senators (Valerius Maximus 2.2.1a) or the Jerusalem Council (Josephus, *Life* 204). Yet ancient historians like Luke were also expected to reconstruct scenes based on reasonable surmises, and the outcome in 4:18 allows for such a reconstruction.⁵⁹¹

The politically astute leaders dare neither lose face by praising the apostles' “benefaction” (4:9) nor enrage the crowds by punishing them for it. Thus they dismiss them with a warning (contrast 5:40), according to the more lenient ancient protocol. Municipal authorities normally suppressed only groups that posed a threat to stability; executing a ringleader was often enough.⁵⁹² Politicians sometimes had to accommodate the

⁵⁸⁵ Jesus apparently did not study with any particular school (cf. John 7:15) except perhaps John, whose authority was widely rejected by the urban elite (Luke 7:30).

⁵⁸⁶ E.g., Xenophon, *Apol.* 19; Aeschines, *Tim.* 171–73; Diog., *Ep.* 9; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.8.579; 2.10.588; *t. 'Ed.* 3:4; *Ab. R. Nat.* 27A; 34, §76B; Mark 2:18, 24.

⁵⁸⁷ E.g., Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.6.4–13, 1281a–1282b; 4.4.4–7, 1292a; 5.4.1–5, 1304b–1305b; 6.2.10–12, 1319b; *Rhet.* 2.20.5, 1393b; Polybius 6.3–4; Diodorus Siculus 10.7.3; 15.58.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.8.1; 7.31.1; 7.56.2; 8.31.4; 9.32.4; 10.18.3; Livy 3.71.5; 6.11.7; 22.34.2; Plutarch, *Cic.* 33.1, 3–4; *Cam.* 31.2; Philo, *Creation* 171; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.223; 6.36

⁵⁸⁸ E.g., Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 66.31; 108.7; Musonius Rufus frg. 41, p. 136.22–26; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.2.18; 1.3.4; 1.18.4; 1.18.10; 2.1.22; 4.8.27; Marcus Aurelius 11.23.

⁵⁸⁹ E.g., Sir 38:25–39.3; *m. Abot* 2:6; 3:10/11, 17; *t. Hag.* 1:2.

⁵⁹⁰ E.g., *m. Git.* 5:9; *Hag.* 2:7; *t. Demai* 2:5, 14–15, 19; 3:6–7; 6:8; *Ma'as.* 2:5. Among the poor attested in the papyri, “illiterate” was not an insult.

⁵⁹¹ Theon, *Progymn.* 4.37–42, 80–82, advised expanding or contracting fables by elaborating speeches or descriptive details; but his example for expanding *chreia* does not change its basic meaning much (*Progymn.* 3.224–40; cf. 2.115–23; cf. Longinus, *Subl.* 11.1). Cf. Luke rephrasing Luke 24:47–49 in Acts 1:4–8.

⁵⁹² E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.40.3; 5.43.2; Josephus, *War* 2.75, 77–78. Contrast more dangerous threats as in Herodian 1.13.4–6.

populace to prevent unrest (cf. Luke 20:1–7); the Sadducees thus sometimes even worked with the more populist Pharisees, despite the serious differences between the two parties (e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.411; *Life* 21–22).

If *What will we do* (Acts 4:16) echoes the only other NT uses of the phrase (Luke 3:12, 14; Acts 2:37), it ironically underlines the contrasting responses to divine activity between the humble and the elite. That *we cannot deny it* (4:16) might mean that they would if they could.⁵⁹³ Some ancient thinkers were skeptical of supernatural claims,⁵⁹⁴ but the irony of the authorities' greater concern for political "damage control" than with the miracle's publicly attested reality is striking. They repress the very name of Jesus (Acts 4:17–18; 5:28, 40–41) that performed the healing (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10). But whereas the authorities *cannot deny* the sign (4:16; cf. the same Greek term for the rejection of Jesus in 3:13–14), Peter and John *cannot* stop attesting the truth (4:20). In Luke-Acts, the reality of what is *seen and heard* (4:20) often refers to divine signs (Luke 2:20; 7:22; Acts 2:33; 8:6; 22:15). The "name" the authorities wish to suppress is the "name" that is performing miracles (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 30) and is the only means available for Jerusalem's salvation (2:21, 38; 4:12). Since the apostles are being *questioned* (*anakrinô*, 4:9), Peter invites the judges to *judge* (*krinô*, 4:19) whether the authorities merited more obedience than God – the same God who clearly raised Jesus from the dead and healed the disabled man.⁵⁹⁵

4:23–30: PRAYER FOR MORE BOLDNESS

Acts 4:23–5:16 displays God's power in the face of human opposition. In 4:23–31, Luke emphasizes God's agents glorifying God in the face of opposition, because opposition fulfills God's plan (4:25–28). They therefore pray for continued boldness backed by continuing signs (4:29–30), obeying God rather than the Council's demand (cf. 4:16–20). As in the previous incident, the Spirit provides boldness (4:8, 13, 29, 31) after a dramatic sign (3:6–10; 4:30–31), a pattern of evangelism continued in Acts (6:8; 8:6; 14:3; 19:10–12; 28:8–9).⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ The disability from birth (3:2) and his age (4:22) meant that it was long-term (cf. Mark 5:25; John 9:1); his place at the temple made the disability and healing (without even atrophied muscles!) widely known (cf. 3:10).

⁵⁹⁴ Cf., e.g., Thucydides 1.22.4; Polybius 7.7.1; Pliny, *Nat. pref.* 12–13. Even Pharisees, who did accept supernatural claims, apparently subordinated them to their traditions (e.g., *t. Yebam.* 14:6).

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. Paul's more polite appeal to obedience for a different situation in 26:19.

⁵⁹⁶ On the Spirit providing boldness to face opposition here, see Mittelstadt, *Spirit*, 99.

Their prayer also illustrates the custom of corporate prayer mentioned in 2:42 (cf. 2:47). As elsewhere in Luke-Acts, prayer invites the coming of the Spirit (Luke 3:21–22; 11:13; Acts 1:14; 8:15). Jesus had warned his followers to respond to persecution with prayer (Luke 6:28; contrast their failure in 22:39–46). As speeches provide perspectives on narrative events in ancient histories, the prayer in this passage theologically interprets the opposition the apostles have experienced. Structurally the passage follows the same pattern as other reports of people narrating what God had done (e.g., Luke 24:33–35).⁵⁹⁷

After being released the apostles returned to “their own.”⁵⁹⁸ Although this could be a more restricted group, it probably refers to the entire community (cf. 2:42, 46; 13:52; 14:27; 15:4), explaining the parallel results on the congregation in 2:44–45 and 4:32. Believers can meet together in the temple (2:42, 46–47), in the vast space around Solomon’s porch (5:12; though cf. 4:31), and were perhaps gathered for the hour of prayer (3:1).

Apart from quotation of the psalm, the prayer is too relevant to the events to be an earlier liturgical form simply recited together, but Luke employs an idiom for speaking in unanimity,⁵⁹⁹ meaning united in agreement. The title *Sovereign Lord* reflects a Greek term often used to address God in Jewish prayers (cf. Luke 2:29),⁶⁰⁰ which could also invoke the maker of heaven and earth (here evoking esp. Ps 146:6; cf. Acts 14:15; 17:24).⁶⁰¹ Who were earthly authorities to stand against such a God?

Indeed, rulers’ opposition fulfilled God’s plan (4:28) already laid out in Scripture (4:25–26). In 4:25–29, the believers identify their sufferings for Christ’s name with Christ’s own (cf. 5:41; 7:59–60; 9:4). Their prayer cites Ps 2:1, which Luke’s Jewish contemporaries attributed to David. But whereas Ps 2 denounced only gentile rulers, the believers probably apply it also to Jerusalem’s leaders as gentiles’ allies.⁶⁰² Rulers “gathered”

⁵⁹⁷ Maloney, *Narration*, 43–66.

⁵⁹⁸ More positive than Judas going to his own (Acts 1:25). The only other occurrence in the context is 4:32, perhaps suggesting that the ideal community counted their spiritual siblings, rather than their possessions, as “their own.”

⁵⁹⁹ Cf., e.g., Polybius 3.62.7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.10.1; 6.87.1; Cicero, *Phil.* 6.1.2; Virgil, *Aen.* 11.122–31; Exod 19:8; 2 Chron 18:12; 4 Macc 8:29; 1 En. 61:11–13; Josephus, *Life* 259.

⁶⁰⁰ E.g., 1 Esd 4:60; Tob 8:17; Jdt 9:12 (master of heaven and earth); Wis 11:26; Sir 23:1; Bar 6:5; 2 Macc 15:22; 3 Macc 2:2; 6:5, 10; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.272; 2.270; 4.40; 5.41; 11.162, 230; 20.90; Rev 6:10.

⁶⁰¹ E.g., 2 Chron 2:12; Ps 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 2 Kgs 19:15//Isa 37:16.

⁶⁰² A familiar perspective; cf. Josephus, *War* 4.147–48, 154, 157, 160, 315–17; *Ant.* 14.29–30.

both against Jesus (Luke 22:66) and the apostles (Acts 4:5). The anointed servant of 4:27 evokes Isaiah's servant (Isa 61:1; see Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), perhaps alongside David as God's servant (Acts 4:25).

Herod Antipas, sometimes simply called Herod, as in 4:27,⁶⁰³ executed John (Mark 6:14–29; Luke 3:19–20; 9:7–9; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.118–19); he also abused Jesus (Luke 23:11; cf. 13:31–32).⁶⁰⁴ Pilate's (4:27) extravagant use of capital punishment (Philo, *Embassy* 302) eventually precipitated his recall (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.88–89); he was ultimately best remembered for his involvement with Jesus's crucifixion (1 Tim 6:13; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). The evil actions of Herod and Pilate, however, served God's own ultimate plan (Acts 4:28). The God who rules creation (4:24) and uses even humans' hostility to his plan to bring about that very plan (4:25–28) also knew the hostility to his servants (4:29a) and could continue to work through them (4:29–30). (In Greek, *threats* in 4:29 echoes the language of 4:17, 21; cf. 9:1.)

Peter and John announced God's message boldly in response to a sign (4:9–13); contrary to the authorities' order to stop speaking in Jesus's name, the community prays for more signs and wonders by Jesus's name and related boldness to continue speaking God's message (4:29–30).⁶⁰⁵ In response, the entire community (not just Peter and John) is *filled with the Holy Spirit* and proclaims the message *with boldness* (4:31). Being filled (or, to use a different liquid metaphor, suffused) with the Spirit ideally leads to speaking the prophetic word of the Lord (2:17–18; cf. 1:8; 2:4).⁶⁰⁶

4:31–35: SECOND OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

Acts 4:23–5:16 reveals the results of God again pouring out the Spirit, as at Pentecost. This second outpouring in the same city demonstrates that Luke

⁶⁰³ See Josephus, *Ant.* 18.104–6, 243–255.

⁶⁰⁴ On Antipas, see further H. W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (SNTSMS 17; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

⁶⁰⁵ Signs and wonders constitute the primary means of drawing attention to the gospel message in Acts (e.g., 2:43; 5:12–16; 14:3). The healing of the disabled man in 3:6–10 functions as the model for the sort of healings for which they now pray: the term rendered *heal* here refers back to it (4:22; the only other NT use is in Luke 13:32).

⁶⁰⁶ Isaianic prophecies also associate God's "word" (e.g., Isa 40:8) with the "good news" of God's kingdom intervention for his people (40:9; 52:7). Because Isa 40:8 belongs to a passage quoted in Luke 3:4–6, it might underlie Luke 3:2.

believes Pentecost not only a past event but also a model for the praying church.

Here as often in Luke-Acts, the Spirit comes in response to prayer (Luke 3:21–22; Acts 1:14; 8:15; 9:11, 17; 10:30, 44–46; cf. 19:6), as Luke's redaction of Q material in Luke 11:13 leads us to expect. And here, as elsewhere in Luke-Acts, prayer often precedes mission (Luke 6:12–13; 10:2; Acts 10:9, 19–20; 13:2–3).

In the face of human opposition, God answers the prayer for increased boldness backed with signs and wonders (4:23–30). This revival brings boldness (4:31) and signs (the probable sense of *power* in 4:33; cf. 2:43; 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 10:38; Luke 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1), a theme revisited in 5:12. Both outpourings also lead to apostolic signs (2:43; 3:4–8; 5:12–16) and consequent confrontations with Jerusalem's ruling elders (4:1–22; 5:17–40).

Yet the second outpouring especially highlights renewed sharing, a theme that dominates the intervening accounts (4:32, 4:34–5:10). Like other summary sections in Acts, this one reinforces the thrust of Luke's narrative.

If evangelism (2:41, 47) framed church life (2:42–46; sharing possessions in 2:44–45) in Luke's first summary section (2:41–47), Luke may here follow an A–B–A–B pattern of narrating the consequences of the prayer:

A The community's proclamation (4:31)

B Sharing possessions (4:32)

A' The apostles' proclamation (4:33a)

B' Sharing possessions (4:34–35)

The place being *shaken* (4:31) evokes God's role as creator (4:24) and esp. OT theophanies, as in Exod 19:18 and especially Isa 6:4 (note its context and also theophanic signs in Acts 1:9; 2:2–3).⁶⁰⁷ Although not a repeated expression of the Spirit's outpouring in Acts (contrast tongues in 2:4; 10:46; 19:6; prophecy in 2:17–18; 19:6; Luke 1:67), it appears after another prayer session in 16:25–26.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ For shaking as a divine confirmation of prayer, cf. also e.g., Ovid, *Metam.* 9.782–85; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.40–51; for other phenomena, cf., e.g., Homer, *Od.* 20.101, 103; 21.413; Virgil, *Aen.* 7.141–42; 8.523–26; 9.630–31; Cicero, *Cat.* 3.8.18; Exod 19:19; 1 Sam 12:17–18; Sir 46:16–17.

⁶⁰⁸ On rare occasions it is also reported in subsequent revival settings, e.g., Colin and Mary Peckham, *Sounds from Heaven: The Revival on the Isle of Lewis, 1949–1952* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2004), 106, 113; cf. George Fox, *Passages from the Life and Writings of George Fox* (Philadelphia, PA: Friends Bookstore, 1881), 27.

Although this second outpouring resembles the first, the parallel to 2:44–45 takes central stage. It offers a concrete contrast between generous sacrifice (4:36–37) and the mere pretense of such religion (5:1–10). Sharing goods frames the paragraph immediately following 4:31 (4:32–35). Some critics wrongly contend that this liquidation of their capital led to the Jerusalem church's later poverty; but Luke specifies that their need's cause was a famine (11:27–30),⁶⁰⁹ and depicts the community of goods in terms that all educated Greek readers would have understood as ideal (see comment on Acts 2:44–45).

"Selling" their possessions may evoke Jesus's call to the rich ruler (Luke 18:22), which constitutes a sort of model for all disciples (Luke 12:33; 14:33; cf. 12:13–34; 16:13, 25; 18:22). Depositing goods at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2) means that they were the managers who would supervise distribution among the needy (6:1–2);⁶¹⁰ the income was not for themselves (3:6). The location at their feet indicates submission (cf. Luke 5:8; 8:35, 41; 10:39; 17:16; Acts 7:58; 10:25; 13:25; 22:3).⁶¹¹

Although Luke articulates an ideal, we know that early Christians valued sharing (Rom 12:13; 2 Cor 8:13–15; Gal 6:10) and being of "one mind" (Rom 12:16; 15:5; 1 Cor 1:10; Phil 1:27; 2:2–4),⁶¹² and Luke does not impose his ideals onto his reports of later stages of the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:3; 15:5).

Some suggest that the outpourings of Acts 2 and 4 are doublets of a single original tradition; if such events happened once, however, it would not be surprising if they happened multiple times. Historically, earlier revivals often generate expectations for subsequent revival movements in the same tradition.⁶¹³ Nevertheless, Luke also parallels the two events, highlighting the long-range impact of the Spirit on care for the poor (cf. also 6:3; 11:28–30), an emphasis in his first volume (esp. Luke 4:18).

Still, Acts mitigates the Gospel's demands in practice: although one must share beyond one's basic needs (3:11), a believer may still have their own

⁶⁰⁹ González, *Acts*, 71 (noting also, 73, that Paul's collection reveals that the practice continued).

⁶¹⁰ Cf. supervisors of funds in CD 14.13–16; *t. B. Qam.* 3:9.

⁶¹¹ In the OT, cf., e.g., Exod 11:8 (MT); 1 Sam 25:24; 2 Kgs 4:37; Esth 8:3; Josephus, *Ant.* 17.248; *War* 2.625.

⁶¹² Many Greek sources value being of one mind or soul (Acts 4:32): e.g., Lysias, *Or.* 2.24, §19; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 4.42; 38.15; 39.3, 8; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 30.167; 1 Chron 12:38 LXX; 4 Macc 8:29; cf. also Ezek 11:19 (MT); comment at Acts 15:25.

⁶¹³ Including, e.g., the noted revivals at Asbury University and the history of US awakenings more generally.

home (Acts 10:6; 12:12; 21:8, 16). Although the rich could be saved only by God's intervention (Luke 18:24–27), Barnabas joins some other persons of means ready to sacrifice to follow Jesus (Luke 19:8–9; 23:50–52).

4:36–5:11: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXAMPLES OF SHARING

Comparison was a standard narrative technique,⁶¹⁴ sometimes employed even to create parallel biographies. Acts 4:36–5:11 contrasts positive and negative models to explain, illustrate, and reinforce the summary statement of 4:32–35.⁶¹⁵ (Cf. also Luke 18:18–30; 19:2–10; contrast Acts 1:18–19.) It also includes apostolic signs of power (5:3–5, 9–10; cf. 4:32; 5:12).

Luke's positive example is Joseph Barnabas (4:36–37). He undoubtedly had many other positive examples available (2:44–45; 4:32, 34–35; cf. Luke 21:2–4),⁶¹⁶ but when possible Luke likes to mention his characters before introducing them in their primary roles (e.g., Philip and Stephen in 6:5; Saul in 7:58 and 8:1). Since naming someone signified authority over them,⁶¹⁷ Barnabas, who also lays possessions at their feet, may appear doubly submissive.⁶¹⁸

"Joseph" (4:36) was a widely common Jewish name, requiring a surname or nickname to distinguish him from others by that name (cf. 1:23).⁶¹⁹ Barnabas's nickname might play on "son of a prophet" (*bar plus nabi*), with prophecy including exhortation (*paraklêsis*, translated in the NRSV as "encouragement").

Place of origin (4:36) was also a frequent basis for identifying a person (e.g., Luke 23:51); identifying Barnabas's place of origin as Cyprus helps explain connections later in the story (11:20; 13:4; 15:39). Many Jews lived in Cyprus (13:4–5).⁶²⁰ Barnabas's Diaspora background might help explain his initial compatibility with Paul, also part of an immigrant family (cf. 6:9; 7:58; 9:1; 26:4). Perhaps Barnabas's associations with Cyprus help explain

⁶¹⁴ See, e.g., Cicero, *Brut.* 93.321–22; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Pomp.* 1–2, 6; Valerius Maximus 5.2.pref; regarding wealth, e.g., Xenophon, *Oec.* 2.2–4.

⁶¹⁵ With, e.g., Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 12.

⁶¹⁶ Given the emphasis on gratitude toward benefactors in the ancient Mediterranean world, many of the positive examples would likely have been remembered.

⁶¹⁷ Gen 2:19; 17:5; 19:39; 25:26, 36; also *Jos. Asen.* 15:7; cf. Luke 6:13–14.

⁶¹⁸ So Johnson, *Acts*, 87.

⁶¹⁹ See M. H. Williams, "Names," 89, 108–9.

⁶²⁰ See, e.g., Philo, *Embassy* 282; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.284–87.

his wealth (and that of his relatives, 12:12–13).⁶²¹ Cyprus was both fertile and rich in minerals and gems.⁶²²

Luke sometimes notes his protagonists' socially respectable status, whether as priests (6:7), Roman citizens (16:37), or (here) Levites. In Scripture, Levites did not hold tribal territories (Num 18:20; Deut 10:9; 12:12; 14:27, 29), and they could not sell their ancestral lands (Num 35:2–7; Josh 14:4; 21:3, 13; 1 Chron 6:64; 9:2; 2 Chron 31:19; Ezra 2:70; Neh 7:73; 11:3, 20; 12:44; 1 Esd 5:46). Nevertheless, by this period Levites sometimes held land (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 11.312) and even became wealthy (cf. *Ant.* 20.181, 206–7, 213).

After the positive example of sharing (4:32–35) in 4:36–37, Luke turns to the key negative example in 5:1–11. Luke condemns hypocrisy (Luke 6:42; 12:1, 56; 13:15; 20:20), including regarding money (16:13–15; cf. 19:46); God judges impostors within the community (Acts 1:18; 5:5) more severely than false prophets outside it (Acts 13:11). Everyone in antiquity understood the futility of lying to a deity (5:3–4); people swore oaths, which invoked gods, precisely on the premise that the gods knew the truth (cf. 1:24; 15:8; Luke 16:15) and would avenge the use of their name for falsehood.

The narrative's confrontation goes beyond Ananias and Peter to Satan (Acts 5:3) and God (5:3–4; cf. the heavenly perspective in 2 Kgs 6:16–17; Eph 6:12). This is not Luke-Acts' first confrontation between Satan and God's Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:1–2, 14, 18) or Peter (22:31). Satan tested Jesus (Luke 4:2; cf. 11:16) as his agent here tests the Spirit (Acts 5:9). Whereas God fills others with the Spirit to proclaim truth (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52), Satan fills Ananias to lie to the Spirit (Acts 5:3) – though obviously ineffectively.⁶²³ As the mission advances, God's servants face Satan's activity through disciples (5:3; cf. Luke 22:3), sorcerers and magicians (8:9–11; 13:8–11; 19:13–16), and demons (16:16; cf. 5:16).⁶²⁴ Earlier in Luke-Acts, Judas, like Ananias here, had Satan in his heart (Luke 22:3; Acts 5:3), conspired for money (Luke 22:4–6; Acts 5:9), and sinned for real estate

⁶²¹ People of means are known from there (e.g., Lucian, *Dem.* 3), including Jews (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.131; cf. Acts 21:16).

⁶²² See Strabo 3.4.15; 14.6.5; Pliny, *Nat.* 33.46.131; 34.2.2, 4; 34.23.106–7; 37.15.58; 37.17.66–37.18.67; 37.38.119; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.51.

⁶²³ Early Jewish thought could contrast the Spirit of Truth with the Spirit of error; 1QS 4.9, 21–23; *T. Jud.* 20:1; cf. *Jub.* 25:14; 1QH^a 9.24; 4Q177 f12–13.1.5; *T. Jud.* 14:8; 20:5; *T. Sim.* 3:1; *T. Reub.* 2:1 [with 2:3–4]; *T. Iss.* 4:4. For Satan and deception, see, e.g., CD 4.15–16; *T. Benj.* 6:1; *T. Dan* 3:6; *T. Levi* 3:3; *T. Jud.* 25:3; *T. Job* 3:3/4; 3:6/5; 26:6/7; 27:1; John 8:44; Eph 6:11; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 12:9; 20:8.

⁶²⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 11.

(Acts 1:18).⁶²⁵ They contrast starkly with the role of true disciples, who forsake all to follow Jesus (3:6; Luke 5:11; 12:33; 14:33; 18:28–30).

In light of the larger Jerusalem narrative of Acts 2–5, the passage also emphasizes the community's sanctity, and warns against lying to the agents of the God who knows all hearts (cf. 1:24).⁶²⁶ Ananias and Sapphira want the benefits of commitment without its full costs, and thereby risked infiltrating God's church with Satan's agenda (5:3; cf. Mark 8:33).⁶²⁷ God's active justice in the ideal community here contrasts with the corruption of the municipal elite in the surrounding context.

Scholars of varying persuasions debate the historical core available to Luke here. Luke lacks incentive to invent a disturbance to the early church's unity,⁶²⁸ and Sapphira's rare name fits almost exclusively the right location and social class.⁶²⁹ The many differences from the OT precedents militate against simple imitation of those passages.

Nevertheless, OT precedents inform Luke's message and some vocabulary here. As Achan kept some of Jericho's wealth devoted to God (Josh 7:1), and so obstructed God's blessing on the entire community (7:4–12), so do Ananias and Sapphira risk here.⁶³⁰ The sudden deaths may also recall the priests who died in God's presence in Lev 10:1–5;⁶³¹ prophetic revelation of secretly profiting from God's acts also appears in 2 Kgs 5:26–27.

Women could own property or own it jointly with their husbands.⁶³² Luke often explicitly depicts both genders sharing in faith (Acts 1:14; 2:18; 5:14; 8:12; 16:13–15; 17:4, 12, 34), suffering (8:3; 9:2; 22:4), or, as here, sin (5:1; 13:50), and judgment (5:10). Still, given the usual authority structure in

⁶²⁵ With Johnson, *Acts*, 40.

⁶²⁶ For expectations for a holy community's special sanctity due to God's presence, see, e.g., Lev 10:2–3; Deut 23:10, 13.

⁶²⁷ New geographic frontiers include symbolic confrontation with hostile spirits (8:9–11; 13:8–11; 19:13–16; cf. 16:16), as with Jesus's kingdom confrontations in the Gospel (Luke 11:20; Johnson, *Acts*, 11). Here, however, the enemy is within (cf. Luke 22:3).

⁶²⁸ Nor was the story designed to appeal to critics; see Porphyry, *Apocrit.* 3.19–22.

⁶²⁹ M. H. Williams, "Names," 95.

⁶³⁰ The biblically rare term *nosphizô*, "pilfer, skim off for oneself" (Acts 5:2–3) applies to sins against community sanctity in both its LXX references (Josh 7:1; 2 Macc 4:32); both perpetrators died shamefully for sacrilege (Josh 7:25–26; 2 Macc 13:1–8).

⁶³¹ Cf. similar judgment for transgressions of holiness (1 Sam 6:19–20; 2 Sam 6:6–7; 1 Chron 13:9–10; 2 Chron 26:19–21) or for threatening or defying God's servants (Ex 32:35; Num 14:37; 16:30–35; 21:6; 25:9; 2 Kgs 1:10, 12; 2 Kgs 2:23–24). For early Jewish judgment traditions, see, e.g., *m. Sotah* 3:4; *Sipra Shemini Mekhilta deMiluim* 99.5.6.

⁶³² Reimer, *Women*, 5 (on women's property rights in marriage more generally, see 2–6).

ancient households,⁶³³ Ananias probably takes the lead (note “*with Sapphira*” in 5:1).

When members joined the Qumran community, they surrendered their resources initially only provisionally (1QS 6.17); after a waiting period of at least a year the novice would either be initiated fully (and the property go to the community, 1QS 1.11–12; 6.17–20) or receive their property back (1QS 6.21–22).⁶³⁴ Early Christians, by contrast, did not abolish property altogether; they kept meeting in homes (2:46; 5:42; 8:3), some apparently well-endowed (12:12–13). Acts 5:4 refers to the funds being the couple’s own after the sale, not after their donation.

The Spirit inspires Peter’s supernatural knowledge here (5:3), like prophets (1 Kgs 14:5; 2 Kgs 4:27; 5:25–27; 6:12, 32) or Jesus himself (Luke 6:8; 9:47; 10:13; 11:17; 21:6–36). Anthropological literature documents suffering and deaths caused by curses,⁶³⁵ sometimes attributed to extreme terror. In this narrative, however, Peter’s words are more like a prophecy or pronouncement of a divine verdict.⁶³⁶ Sapphira falling to her death at Peter’s “feet” (5:10) contrasts starkly with the couple’s pretended submission of part of their property at the apostles’ feet (5:2; cf. 4:35, 37). The couple pretended submission earlier; now they offer it involuntarily in death.⁶³⁷

People would quickly cover corpses to preserve the deceased’s dignity (5:6). Jewish custom required the rapid burial of corpses, preferably on the day of death (cf. Deut 21:23).⁶³⁸ Jerusalem Christians, like ancient burial

⁶³³ See, e.g., Philo, *Creation* 167; C. S. Keener, “Marriage,” *DNTB* 680–93 (687–91); Keener, *Acts*, 1:619–26.

⁶³⁴ See Capper, “Context,” 329; idem, “Acts 5.4”; cf. Pythagoreans in Iamblichus, *V.P.* 30.168. Evidence suggests that those who signed over their property did so with a legal document (D. Flusser, “Ostrakon from Qumran Throws Light on First Church,” *Jerusalem Perspective* 53 [1997]: 12–15). As here, particular leaders of the community (1QS 6.12; cf. Josephus, *War* 2.123, 134; *Ant.* 18.22) had to evaluate the case. There, however, those who lied about property merely forfeited full participation for a year and a quarter of their food allowance (1QS 6.24–25); here they forfeit their lives.

⁶³⁵ See, e.g., R. Prince, “Indigenous Yoruba Psychiatry,” pages 84–120 in *Magic, Faith, and Healing* (ed. A. Kiev; New York: Free Press, 1964), 91; J. Dawson, “Urbanization and Mental Health in a West African Community,” pages 305–42 in *ibid.*, 328–29; J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 258. Most people in the ancient Mediterranean world also accepted the efficacy of curses (e.g., Aeschylus, *Lib.* 912; *Seven* 70, 656, 695–97, 709).

⁶³⁶ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 38; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 324. Cf. however similarities with curses in B. H. M. Kent, “Curses in Acts: Hearing the Apostles’ Words of Judgment alongside ‘Magical’ Spell Texts,” *JSNT* 39 (4, 2017): 412–40.

⁶³⁷ Cf. Judg 5:27; 2 Sam 22:39; Ps 18:38; Rev 3:9; voluntarily, 1 Sam 25:24; 2 Kgs 4:37; Esth 8:3.

⁶³⁸ Safrai, “Home,” 774.

associations, probably assumed responsibility for the burial of members who had contributed financially. Luke might mention the *young men* (5:6, 10; cf. Lev 10:4–5) to reflect their supportive role (cf. Acts 7:58; Luke 22:26) or strength (cf. Prov 20:29; 1 John 2:14). That they *carried him out* (5:6; cf. 5:10) might ironically recall how he “brought” (a cognate verb) some of the money.

As one would expect from responses to divine actions in Luke’s account so far (Luke 1:12, 65; 2:9; 4:36; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37; Acts 2:43; 9:31; 19:17), fear fell on others afterward (5:5, 11).⁶³⁹ Luke might evoke here the deterrent value of capital sentences in Deut 13:11; 17:13; 19:20; 21:21 (cf. 11Q19 61.10–11) and judgment miracles.⁶⁴⁰

Bridging Horizons: Holiness

Some who pray for awakening or holiness would fear what it demands. Luke’s depiction of the sanctity of a church experiencing God’s power contrasts starkly with Western Christendom’s sometimes merely institutional church and its merely routine meetings. The intense presence of God’s Spirit (5:3, 9; cf. 4:31) left no room for nominalism or mere pretense of commitment (cf. 5:13).⁶⁴¹ Pleasing God, not impressing humans, must motivate generosity (Luke 16:13–15). Even Luke, however, apparently does not expect God to normally enforce community holiness so directly (cf. 20:29–31). ****

5:12–16: APOSTOLIC SIGNS AND HONOR

As in Acts 2:42–47 and 4:31–35, Luke transitions between scenes with a summary section; this one picks up the thought of 4:33 (after the digression of 4:36–5:11, which illustrated the thought of 4:34–35). Authors often reinforced their themes in summary sections.

Believers continue to meet at Solomon’s Porch (5:12; cf. 2:46; 3:11; 7:47); only the temple’s courts could host their massive numbers (2:41; 4:4). The word rendered *together* in 5:12 probably suggests the movement’s unity of purpose, as does the same term in 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 15:25.

⁶³⁹ For the expression, see, e.g., Exod 15:16; Deut 2:25; Josh 2:9; 1 Sam 11:7; Jdt 2:28; 1 Macc 7:18.

⁶⁴⁰ Num 16:34; Ovid, *Metam.* 6.146–47, 313–15; also in some modern accounts.

⁶⁴¹ Cf. the focus on the Spirit in D. Marguerat, “La mort d’Ananias et Saphira (Ac 5.1–11) dans la stratégie narrative de Luc,” *NTS* 39 (2, 1993): 209–26.

God's decisive judgment against Ananias and Sapphira in 5:1–11 guarantees that, for the time being at least, only true believers (5:14; "men and women," balancing the report of Ananias and Sapphira) and not compromising ones (5:13) will join the movement.⁶⁴² The movement thus grew all the more (as in 2:47).

Larger streets (5:15) helped demarcate neighborhood units; Jerusalem's widest, paved streets were some 20–30 feet wide; 8 feet may have been more common. We should thus imagine considerable congestion (not a new situation for ministry of the word; cf. Luke 5:1; 8:42, 45). Streets were busy public venues,⁶⁴³ hosting teachers as well as merchants (Luke 10:10; 13:26; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 20.9). As in Acts 5:15–16, Luke elsewhere reports crowds gathered for healing (Luke 4:40; 5:15, 17; 6:18–19; 9:11; Acts 8:7; 28:9); word spread rapidly in antiquity, especially concerning benefactions.⁶⁴⁴

Many people in antiquity regarded one's shadow as part of one's body, so it is not surprising that some would seek for contact with at least Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15). Scholars have compared the involuntary flow of power from healers (Paul in Acts 19:12; Jesus in Mark 5:30; Luke 6:19; 8:46) with Greek, sometimes magical, conceptions of divine power as a sort of fluid substance (though Luke's apologetic is antimagical; cf. Acts 8:9–11; 19:11–20). Most relevant are ancient ideas of the effects of others' shadows, though these are often negative.⁶⁴⁵ But Luke also has biblical precedents for contact and proximity communicating power (1 Sam 19:20–24; 2 Kgs 2:14; 13:20–21), and Luke elsewhere applies the language of overshadowing (a Greek term used here) to the divine presence (Luke 1:35; 9:34; cf. Exod 40:35; Ps 91:1, 4).

⁶⁴² *Pace* some, outsiders likely fear to join the movement generally, not just the apostles. Possibly outsiders respected the early Christians the way gentile God-fearers respected Judaism (cf. Acts 10:2): respecting but unwilling to pay the personal price necessary to become a full member.

⁶⁴³ E.g., Luke 14:21; Prov 1:20; 5:16; 7:12; Song 3:2; Isa 42:2; Jer 5:1; 9:21; Lam 1:20; Nah 2:4; 3 Macc 1:20; Matt 6:2, 5; P.Oxy. 261.8–9; P.Oxy 266.7; P.Oxy 270.7.

⁶⁴⁴ Even today, signs often spark movements' growth; see, e.g., De Wet, "Signs"; D. P. Norwood, "A Reconciliation Colloquium for Church Leaders in Suriname" (DMin dissertation, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2001), 24–26; Yung, "Integrity," 173–75; M. Marostica, "Learning from the Master: Carlos Annacondia and the Standardization of Pentecostal Practices in and Beyond Argentina," pages 207–27 in Brown, *Global Healing*, 207.

⁶⁴⁵ See esp. P. W. Van der Horst, "Peter's Shadow: The Religio-Historical Background of Acts v.15," *NTS* 23 (2, 1977): 204–12.

Healing the sick (Luke 7:22 in light of Isa 35:5) and casting out demons (Luke 11:20) herald the promised divine kingdom. Delivering *those tormented by unclean spirits* (5:16) verbally evokes Jesus's ministry (Luke 6:18), and otherwise continues in subsequent sources (Acts 16:18; 19:12).⁶⁴⁶ Demons sometimes caused sicknesses (cf. Luke 13:11; Acts 10:38), but sicknesses could also have other causes (Luke 6:18; Acts 9:8; 13:11).⁶⁴⁷

5:17–28: ARREST, RELEASE, REARREST

In response to further signs and bold preaching, the apostles encounter harsher persecution in 5:17–42. The authorities' crackdown on Jesus's appointed agents in 5:17–18 contrasts with the people's favorable reception of them in 5:12–16. From Luke's perspective, Jerusalem might well have embraced the movement had it not been for the corrupt establishment in power at the time. The narrative's portrait of a power struggle between a political elite and a populist movement comports well with reality as experienced and interpreted by many repressed groups in much of the world.⁶⁴⁸

Although the narrative illustrates God's power to deliver from captivity,⁶⁴⁹ it highlights especially empowered boldness to proclaim Christ despite persecution. Before Jesus's arrest, Peter claimed that he was willing to face both prison and death for Jesus (Luke 22:33), yet he failed. By contrast, transformed through the resurrection and Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5), he stands boldly here. His imprisonments (4:3; 5:18; 12:4–6) also connect him backward with John's ministry (Luke 3:20) and forward with Paul (Acts 16:23–40; 24:27) and other disciples (Luke 21:12; Acts 8:3; 22:4; 26:10).

Luke here calls the Sadducees a "sect" (*hairesis*), a title he elsewhere applies to Pharisees (15:5; 26:5) and others apply to Christians (24:5; 28:22);

⁶⁴⁶ Later, see MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 27–28. "Unclean" spirits might evoke associations with levitical impurity (cf. Hittite parallels in J. Milgrom, *Leviticus: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB; 3 vols.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991–2001], 256–57, 259–60, 318, 766).

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. further J. C. Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance* (JPTSup 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

⁶⁴⁸ See especially González, *Acts*, 86–87. Well-known religious figures include, among many others, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and Baptist figures Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. in the USA, Catholic Archbishop Óscar Romero in El Salvador, and Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa.

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. also Luke 4:18; Acts 16:26–28; but only 12:8–11, the most dangerous case, is a permanent escape.

Josephus applies the term similarly,⁶⁵⁰ probably following Greek usage for various philosophic schools.⁶⁵¹ Like Joseph's brothers (7:9), the popular movement's opponents are often motivated by *jealousy* (5:17; 13:45; 17:5), a common motive and charge in ancient political culture.⁶⁵² That the death of a well-to-do couple confronted by Peter was widely reported (5:11) may have made matters worse (cf. Num 16:41).

The authorities presumably believed themselves lenient so far; they had sought only to restrict public preaching, not to suppress the church. Now, however, matters had escalated to the point of threatening their own public honor and control, and inaction appeared more dangerous than intervention.

The jail here in 5:18 is not the Fortress Antonia, currently controlled by a Roman cohort, but is probably near the temple (cf. 5:21). In any case, in 5:19 an angel releases the apostles without the guards noticing, as later in 12:7–10. In contrast to that later, deadlier situation, this release facilitates further public preaching (5:20, 25; cf. 4:20, 29, 31; 5:28–32).

Paul reports persecutions (2 Cor 11:23–25; 1 Thess 2:2), including in Jewish circles (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Thess 2:14–15; cf. Rom 15:31), and including detentions (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23; Phil 1:7, 13; 4:22). Because Luke writes narrative, he lists fewer events but provides more (and more varied) detailed scenes. Accounts of “miraculous” escapes continue in modern times (e.g., of Sundar Singh).

Yet Luke probably also draws on Greek literary motifs in the way that he recounts this story. In a widely told story, Dionysus freed his followers from prison (Euripides, *Bacch.* 443–45), and the fetters fell “of themselves” (cf. Acts 12:10) from their feet (*Bacch.* 447); doors likewise “unbolted themselves” without human hand (448; cf. 642–43).⁶⁵³ Hellenistic Judaism had already adopted the motif, probably by the third or second

⁶⁵⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.171, 288, 293; 20.199; *War* 2.118, 137, 142, 162; *Life* 10, 12, 191, 197; cf. Philo, *Contempl.* 29.

⁶⁵¹ E.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.19.20; Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.6a, pp. 38–39.4; 6b, pp. 38–39.19; 7, pp. 42–43.26; 11m, pp. 86–87.22; 11m, pp. 90–91.16.

⁶⁵² Contrary to those who suppose it limited to novels, it appears widely in political biographies and historiography; e.g., Nepos 5 (Cimon), 3.1; 8 (Thrasybulus), 4.1–2; 12 (Chabrias), 3.3; 14 (Datames), 5.2; 15 (Epaminondas), 7.1; 18 (Eumenes), 7.2; 10.2; 23 (Hannibal), 1.2; Velleius Paterculus 2.40.4; 2.47.2; Plutarch, *Coriol.* 39.1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.18; Josephus, *Life* 204, 290, 423, 425. Historians freely assigned motives (see, e.g., Pelling, *Texts*, 77–81).

⁶⁵³ Others repeated these motifs, e.g., Apollonius Rhodius 4.41–42; Apollodorus, *Bib.* 3.5.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30.

century BCE.⁶⁵⁴ Those who imprisoned the god's followers were said to be *fighting against God*, as in Acts 5:39; cf. 26:14.

The temple provided the best venue for preaching to the people (5:20), and might also evoke Jer 7:2; 26:2 (cf. 17:19; 18:2; 22:1); their *message about this life* (Acts 5:20) concerns eternal life (cf. 13:46), and so parallels *the message of this salvation* (13:26). That the apostles follow dangerous divine instructions by speaking (5:21, 29) contrasts starkly with the rulers' expectation of obedience to their own command to be silent (5:28).

The temple guards' most important duty was to guard the temple,⁶⁵⁵ keeping its gates closed (e.g., Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.119). They opened them, however, well before the dawn sacrifice and morning prayer (Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.171; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.257; 14.65; *Ag. Ap.* 2.105); hence the apostles' entrance *at daybreak* (Acts 5:21). Meanwhile, the Sadducees, who reportedly rejected belief in divine intervention (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.173), were astonished at the disappearance and concerned about the effects (*what might be going on* could mean, as suggested in many other translations, "what would come from this"; Acts 5:24). The highest priests and especially the captain of the guard (see comment on 4:1, 5–6) lost face (were shamed) in front of the other Jerusalem leaders they had gathered (5:21).

The corrupt aristocratic priestly dynasties of this period were known for using violence to achieve their ends.⁶⁵⁶ After discovering the apostles' mysterious escape, however, the officers must now rearrest them publicly in front of a crowd (5:26), so if anything happens to the apostles, all Jerusalem will know of it. Popular support sometimes protected a person (e.g., Josephus, *Life* 250), and politics sometimes demanded compromise (e.g., Plutarch, *Caes.* 10.7). The officers' fear of the people "stoning" them recalls Luke's redaction in Luke 20:6. Ironically, Jerusalem's leaders seem paralyzed by concern with the views of the populace (Luke 19:47–48; 20:6, 19, 26; 22:2, 6, 53; Acts 4:21), whom they believe Jesus was misleading (Luke 23:5, 14).

"Filling" the city with their teaching (5:28) reflects conventional hyperbole;⁶⁵⁷ speaking of bringing *blood on us* (5:28) means holding them

⁶⁵⁴ See esp. Artapanus in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.23; Weaver, *Epiphany*, 69–84. Earlier, cf. other escapes in Gen 19:15–16; 1 Kgs 19:7; Dan 6:22 (cf. Ps 142:7); esp. the exodus (Exod 3:2; 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:3).

⁶⁵⁵ See 1 Chron 9:17–27; 15:18–24; 16:38–39; 23:3–5, 19; 34:13; 35:15; Ezra 2:42, 70; 7:7; 10:24; Neh 7:1, 45, 73; 10:28, 39; 11:19; 12:25, 45–47; 13:5, 22; *m. Mid.* 1.1; comment on Acts 4:1; 21:30.

⁶⁵⁶ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.181, 206–7; *Life* 192–93, 196–98, 216; *t. Menah.* 13:21.

⁶⁵⁷ See, e.g., Acts 19:29; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.14; Lucian, *Runaways* 16; *Alex.* 2.

responsible for shedding innocent blood, and therefore liable to judgment.⁶⁵⁸ Ironically, however, the leaders *were* guilty of Jesus's blood (5:30; cf. 18:6), thus climaxing a history of martyred prophets (Luke 11:50–51). The apostles would carry bloodguilt for their hearers if they *failed* to speak (Acts 20:26, echoing Ezek 33:6)!

5:29–33: OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN THE ELITE

Peter and the apostles again emphasize that obedience to God takes precedence over obedience to other authorities (4:19–20). Because the apostles obey God (5:29), they can act by the Holy Spirit, whereas the authorities, who do not obey God, cannot (5:32). The authorities killed the true king and savior God appointed for Israel (5:31) – just as they now are tempted to kill his agents who simply attest what they have witnessed firsthand (5:32–33).

On this occasion Peter omits even a polite address (contrast 4:8). Forensic speeches sometimes reversed charges against accusers (though not judges!); Peter here charges the authorities openly with judicial murder and implies their disobedience to God, in contrast to the apostles' obedience (5:29, 32). Obeying God rather than people⁶⁵⁹ evokes Socrates's defense (Plato, *Apol.* 29D; see comment on Acts 4:19), widely enough known for Luke's ideal audience to hear the analogy. The divine commission they were called to obey (cf. Acts 1:2) was to be witnesses (1:8; cf. 26:16–19).

Hanging him on a tree (5:30) was not the usual Roman way of describing crucifixion, but it was a biblical expression (Deut 21:22–23; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4.202) by this period applied to crucifixion (4Q169 f3–4.1.8; 11Q19 64.7–12). Luke uses the title *Savior* (Acts 5:31) only in exclusively *Jewish* settings (Luke 1:47, 69; 2:11; Acts 13:23); *Leader*, or prince, is the same Greek term translated *Author* in 3:15 (see comment there). Ancient inscriptions often hail rulers as saviors, though Luke may have in mind especially OT language (e.g., Isa 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26). Exaltation to God's *right hand* (Acts 5:31; cf. 2:33–34) established Jesus as supreme ruler.

⁶⁵⁸ See, e.g., Gen 4:10–11; Deut 19:10, 13; 21:8–9; 22:8; 2 Sam 1:16; 3:8; 21:1–6; 1 Kgs 2:32–33, 37; 21:19–24; 2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4; Ps 106:38; Prov 6:17; Jer 7:6; 19:4; 22:3, 17; 26:15; Ezek 18:13; Hos 12:14; Matt 23:35; 27:4, 24–25.

⁶⁵⁹ Also elsewhere, e.g., Sophocles, *Antigone* 450–55. The pairing of “gods and people” was familiar rhetorically (e.g., Polybius 18.54.9, 11; 22.10.8; 27.8.4; Seneca, *Ben.* 7.1.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.40; *T. Reub.* 4:8). The contrast between God and humans is frequent in early Christian texts, including in Luke (Luke 2:14; 12:8; 16:15; 18:27) and in this context (Acts 5:4). Antithesis was a familiar rhetorical device (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 26, 1435b.25–39).

In Greek, Peter's speech begins (5:29) and ends (5:32) with obeying God. God has signified the apostles' obedience by giving them the Spirit (5:32; cf. 4:8), which the Sanhedrin lacks. Some Jewish tradition linked the Spirit with obedience or exceptional holiness,⁶⁶⁰ though Luke highlights the Spirit as a gift (Luke 11:13; Acts 8:18; 15:8) received through repentance (Acts 2:38).

Although hearers whose hearts are moved may repent (2:37), they may conversely be *enraged* enough to kill (5:33; 7:54; cf. Luke 4:28). Forensic rhetoric often sought to stir anger – but only against one's opponents. That the rulers *wanted* to kill them ironically inverts the high priest's complaint that the apostles were unjustly *determined* (the same Greek term) to charge the leaders with Jesus's blood (5:28). The Sanhedrin lacked capital authority,⁶⁶¹ but the text may suggest that many members were angry enough to act extrajudicially on the spot (cf. Acts 7:57–58; 23:10).⁶⁶² They were not often confronted with insubordination from leaders of a rapidly growing movement in their capital.

5:34–40A: GAMALIEL'S DEFENSE

The Sadducees (5:17), like many other powerful elites, sometimes abused their power violently, but by this period the Pharisees (5:34), like their rabbinic successors, were more lenient, requiring much more evidence in capital cases (see Josephus, *Ant.* 13.294; 20.199). They were known as “exact” interpreters of the laws and drew on tradition from their predecessors.⁶⁶³ They also profited from religious tolerance.

Although they earlier held political power under Salome Alexandra (Josephus, *War* 1.110–13; *Ant.* 13.399–405), the families of Herod and the Sadducean priestly aristocracy formed the regional and municipal governments under the Romans, minimizing their power.⁶⁶⁴ Their popularity with the people, however, gave them considerable influence (*Ant.* 13.297–98; 18.15, 17), and some Pharisees were influential aristocrats (*Life* 21, 196, 216).

⁶⁶⁰ E.g., *Mek. Beshallah* 7.135ff.; *Sipre Deut.* 173.1.3.

⁶⁶¹ See John 18:31; Keener, *John*, 1107–9; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 32–43 (esp. 36).

⁶⁶² For other intra-Jewish violence, see, e.g., 1QpHab 8.8–12; 9.4–7; 12.5; 4QpNah 1.11; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.17; 20.180, 213; *m. Yad.* 4:7; *t. Hag.* 3:35; *Nid.* 5:3.

⁶⁶³ Josephus, *War* 1.110; 2.162; *Ant.* 13.297–98; *Life* 191.

⁶⁶⁴ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 128–29; idem, *Judaism*, 388–402, 458–90. Their views often conflicted with those of the Sadducees (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297; *t. Hag.* 3:35).

Just as a “good” member of the Council favored Jesus in the Gospel (Luke 23:50–51, albeit more quietly), so now a good member stands for justice for God’s servants. In contrast to the unethical priestly elite, Pharisees try to protect Jesus and his followers here, in 23:9, and in Luke 13:31.⁶⁶⁵ Gamaliel, a minority Pharisee on the Council, does not so much defend the apostles’ views but the Pharisaic position of tolerance. Meanwhile, Gamaliel’s warning that fighting against them could constitute fighting against God (5:39) soon proves a verdict against Gamaliel’s own (wayward?) disciple Saul (9:4; 26:14; cf. 22:3). Moreover, Gamaliel is correct: if Jesus’s movement is not a human revolutionary movement, but from God, nothing will stop it (5:39). And in Acts, nothing does (5:42; 28:30–31)!

That Gamaliel was respected by all the people (5:34; 22:3) is also attested in rabbinic comments on him and his line.⁶⁶⁶ Later rabbinic tradition also sometimes portrayed Gamaliel as lenient (*b. Pesah.* 88b), though his aristocratic son Simon appears less honorable (Josephus, *Life* 193).⁶⁶⁷ Later sources depict him as successor of Hillel, who was known for his and his school’s tolerance.⁶⁶⁸

Although the apostles were not present for Gamaliel’s speech (5:34), Luke may infer its basic content from their surprising (cf. 5:33) survival (5:40). Saul probably also knew Gamaliel’s general opinion about Jesus’s movement (22:3) and leaks from the Council and other “closed” elite bodies were relatively common (cf. Luke 23:50–51).⁶⁶⁹ But historians could reconstruct scenes based on inference and/or limited information.⁶⁷⁰

Whereas Luke grounds the apostolic ministry in the OT ministry of the prophets (3:18, 21, 24–25; 7:52–53), Gamaliel compares the Jesus movement

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. also probably in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–3; Pharisees may have seen law-keeping Judean followers of Jesus as allies. For their ambiguous role in Luke-Acts, cf. Luke 7:36; 11:37; 13:31; 14:1; Acts 15:5; 23:6; D. B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 177–296, esp. 301–5.

⁶⁶⁶ E.g., *m. Sotah* 9:15; cf. *m. Pe’ah* 2:6; ‘*Or.* 2:12; *Ros Has.* 2:5; *Seqal.* 6:1; *Yebam.* 16:7; *Git.* 4:2; *Abot* 1:16.

⁶⁶⁷ Simon was also a learned Pharisee (*Life* 191–92) and wielded extraordinary authority and influence (190, 193, 216), though subject to the Council (309).

⁶⁶⁸ On Hillel’s alleged mildness, see, e.g., *b. Sabb.* 31a; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:589; for Hillelites’ lenience, see *m. Git.* 9:10; *t. Sabb.* 1:16; 16:22; *Sipre Deut.* 269.1.1.

⁶⁶⁹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Life* 204; Nepos 4 (Pausanias), 5.1; 14 [Datames], 5.3; Valerius Maximus 2.2.1a; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.53.

⁶⁷⁰ Fornara, *Nature of History*, 167–68; esp. Padilla, *Speeches*.

with armed resistance movements (5:36–37),⁶⁷¹ a view perhaps shared by many of his colleagues (Luke 22:37; 23:2, 5; cf. Acts 17:7; 24:5).

This speech cites two of the most prominent revolutionaries of the period. Judas the Galilean⁶⁷² led a revolt in the days of the census (5:37), in 6 CE (cf. Luke 2:2). Theudas apparently was an eschatological sign-prophet, seeking (unsuccessfully) to part the Jordan before the governor captured and beheaded him (*Ant.* 20.97–98). But whereas Luke places Theudas's revolt before that of Judas, Josephus, who has special interest in the revolts, places it c. 44 CE. Josephus often enough got his details wrong (e.g., *Ant.* 18.206), but in this case most scholars deem the confusion likelier Luke's.⁶⁷³ (The proposal that there was another revolutionary named Theudas before Judas⁶⁷⁴ falters on the rareness of the name, against the claims of some.) If Luke had reason to believe that Gamaliel compared the movement to revolutionaries, Luke might provide the most prominent ones likeliest known to his audience.

Still, Luke's wording is ironic. Like Simon (8:9), but in contrast to Peter and Paul (who refuse divine honors, 10:25–26; 14:14–15), Theudas claimed to be "someone."⁶⁷⁵ As Theudas' followers were also scattered (a different term in 5:36), the Council might expect the same ultimate fate for Jesus's followers; their scattering, however, will proliferate them (8:1, 4; 11:19–20). In the wake of the Judean-Roman war, it is important for Luke's audience to understand the difference between Jesus's movement and aborted messianic movements that led to Jerusalem's demise.

⁶⁷¹ Some Pharisees supported such movements (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4, 9) – though Gamaliel underestimates the movement's size (cf. 5:36 with 2:41; 4:4)!

⁶⁷² From Galilee in *Ant.* 17.271; 18.23; 20.102; *War* 2.56, 118, 433; from Gamala east of the Jordan in *Ant.* 18.4. His sons later rebelled also (*Ant.* 20.102).

⁶⁷³ Cf. B. Reicke, *The New Testament Era* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), 204 n. 51; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 162–63; Riesner, *Early Period*, 332–33. Luke's alleged dependence on Josephus here, however, is unlikely, both because they differ and because well-known events need not be derived only from a single literary source.

⁶⁷⁴ Proposed as early as Origen, *Cels.* 1.57; contrast, e.g., Bede, *Commentary on Acts* 5:36–37; Johann Spangenberg, *Brief Exegesis of Acts* 5:36. One might compare the two churchmen named John Eck in Luther's day. But while Josephus mentions "thousands" of disorders in Judea (*Ant.* 17.269), he specifies by name only the most prominent – such as Judas and Theudas.

⁶⁷⁵ Theudas also "rose up," the same term used for Jesus's resurrection (2:24, 32; 3:22, 26), though it is by no means limited to that. People "followed" both Theudas and Judas (5:36–37), as the apostles claimed to "obey" (a cognate Greek term) God (5:29, 32).

Despite a comparison with revolutionaries, Gamaliel advocates noninterference, a Lukan ideal for authorities (cf. Acts 18:15; 25:19). When Gamaliel warns of the risk of *fighting against God* (5:39), he probably draws attention to the apostles' mysterious release from prison (5:19, 23). When Dionysus released his followers from prison, the king who opposed him was found, in an influential play of Euripides, to be fighting against a god; many, including Greek-speaking Jews (2 Macc 7:19),⁶⁷⁶ had since drawn on Euripides's expression. Even one of Gamaliel's own students (Acts 22:3) will in fact be found fighting God (26:14) by fighting against this Jesus's movement. *This plan* (5:38) is in fact from God (Luke 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 13:36; 20:27).

5:40B–42: CONTINUED OBEDIENCE

After the Council has the apostles flogged (5:40), they celebrate their shame in human eyes (5:41) and continue obeying their commission to be witnesses (5:42). They follow what Jesus taught them in Luke 6:22–23 (cf. Rom 5:3; Jms 1:2; 1 Pet 1:6).⁶⁷⁷

Whereas the authorities fear for their honor (5:28), Jesus's apostles count it honorable to suffer public shame for his name or reputation, i.e., to honor him (5:41). Whereas Gamaliel is *respected* (5:34), the apostles *suffer dishonor* (5:41). As always, the exalted would be humbled, and the reverse (Luke 1:52; 10:15; 14:11; 18:14; so also with Jesus, Acts 2:33; 5:31). Yet the apostles are too popular in Jerusalem to risk handling them like Jesus earlier or like Paul later; their martyrdom would reinforce popular discontent about Jesus's martyrdom (5:28). The Council is *convinced by* Gamaliel (5:39) – ironically using the same Greek term for the followers of revolutionary leaders in 5:36–37.

Ancient courts could order beatings for violating court orders.⁶⁷⁸ Beatings were an act of public humiliation (e.g., Homer, *Il.* 2.265–70; 1 Thess 2:2), even as a comparison with slaves (Josephus, *Ant.* 4.238). Given Deut

⁶⁷⁶ For knowledge of Dionysus worship, cf. 2 Macc 6:7; 14:33; 3 Macc 2:29.

⁶⁷⁷ Those familiar with Stoic (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.6.1; 4.7.9; Marcus Aurelius 6.16) and Jewish (1QS 10.15–17; Sir 2:4; 1 En. 108:10; Josephus, *War* 2.152–53; 2 Bar. 52:6; *Sipre Deut* 32.5.5) traditions would respect rejoicing in suffering. True philosophers, a first-century Stoic noted, ought to despise blows and insults (Musonius Rufus 10, p. 76.20–24); those who regard popular honor do not discern what is really shameful (76.29–30).

⁶⁷⁸ In Egyptian papyri, see N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 194.

25:2–3, the flogging was probably limited to thirty-nine lashes (cf. 2 Cor 11:24).⁶⁷⁹ Although Sadducees might not trifle with Pharisaic traditions, the Pharisaic ideal was to strike the offender's back twenty-six times and front thirteen times with a whip of calf leather.⁶⁸⁰

Jewish sources praised martyrs who died for their ancestral covenant, for God, his law, or piety (1 Macc 2:50; 2 Macc 7:9; 4 Macc 6:27, 30; 9:7; 16:25); they emphasized sanctifying God's name (Luke 11:2). Here the apostles suffer for Jesus's name (Acts 5:40–41; cf. Mark 13:13; John 15:21).

Acts 5:42 caps the narrative with a summary statement (as in 2:46; 4:33; 5:12–14; the next is 6:7). It particularly evokes 2:46: they continue their activity daily not only in homes but also publicly in the temple; they also continue to obey God rather than people (5:41–42). The semantic range of teaching and proclamation overlap often in Acts; the ideas appear together also in the book's conclusion (28:31; cf. 15:35; Luke 20:1). The public nature of their activity also undercuts the possibility of charges of subversion (cf. John 18:20).

6:1–7: THE HELLENIST LEADERS

In 6:1–9:30, Luke reports the cross-cultural expansion of the church through the Hellenists, bicultural Jews whose background exposed them to the wider eastern Mediterranean culture. These chapters (Acts 6–8 or 6–9) provide a sort of transition between the Jerusalem church and the beginning of the gentile mission.⁶⁸¹

Luke begins with the ministry of the Hellenist leaders, to whom the apostles delegate their economic ministry (6:1–7), and focuses on Stephen (6:8–7:60) and Philip (8:5–40). Also in focus is a particular Hellenist nemesis of these Christians, namely Saul (7:58; 8:1–3), who is soon converted and called to proclaim the message he once persecuted (9:1–30; Gal 1:23). The first gentile God-fearer is converted in Acts 8:27–39, although the first “official” gentile known to the Jerusalem church appears only in ch. 10.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ant.* 4.238, 248; *m. Mak.* 1:1–3; 3:3–5, 10–11; *Hul.* 5:2; *Kil.* 8:3; *Naz.* 4:3; *Pesah.* 7:11; *Tem.* 1:1; *t. Tem.* 1:1. The offender was likelier to receive this after defying a prior warning (*y. Ter.* 7:1).

⁶⁸⁰ *M. Mak.* 3:10–13; *Sipre Deut.* 286.5.1.

⁶⁸¹ For transitional sections elsewhere, see, e.g., Valerius Maximus 1.6.7, 9; 1.6.ext. 2–3; B. W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of New Testament Chain-Link Transitions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 4–5, 10–18, 21–23, 34–37, 41, 46, 62–66 (on “chain-link interlock”); D. Brack, *Luke's Legato Historiography* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 8–14. Cf. Licona, *Differences*, 89–90, on Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.5.129; Lucian, *Hist.* 55.

This larger section also allows for the transition from Peter (a bridge between Jesus and Paul) to Paul as central characters. Saul is a Hellenist (cf. 6:9; 7:58; 9:11). Luke moves between Saul (7:58–8:3; 9:1–30; 11:30; 12:25) and Philip (8:4–40) or Peter (9:31–11:18; 12:1–24; cf. 8:14–25), with Antioch (11:19–30; 12:25–13:4) offering another transition from Jerusalem to the gentile mission and Paul (note esp. 11:25–26, 30) until turning permanently to Paul in 12:25–28:31 (though Peter reappears in 15:7–14). Saul’s persecution (7:58–8:3; 9:1–2) frames Philip’s ministry (8:4–40); Paul’s apostolic call (9:15; 13:2–4) might in some way implicitly frame all of the final Peter section (9:32–12:24), and his ministry to the Jerusalem church clearly frames the narrative of Peter’s departure from Jerusalem (11:30–12:25).

Acts 6:1–9:31 continues and sometimes escalates some earlier themes:⁶⁸²

Election of Matthias (1:23–26)	Election of the Seven (6:3–6)
Peter teaches about Abraham and Moses (3:22, 25)	Stephen develops themes about Abraham and Moses further (7:2–7, 20–49)
Apostles are arrested, tried, and beaten (4:3–22; 5:17–41; but cf. especially 5:33)	Stephen is arraigned, tried, and killed (6:11–7:60; cf. especially 7:54)
Spirit comes at Pentecost and in 4:31	Spirit comes in Samaria (8:14–17)
Collecting and distributing goods for those in need (4:34–35)	Collecting and distributing goods for those in need (6:2–3)
Greedy Ananias filled with Satan (5:3)	Greedy Simon the sorcerer (8:20)

In 6:1–7 Luke introduces some characters who will become crucial in his narrative, both individually and as a cultural and missiological transition to the gentile mission. In this passage the crucial ministry of resource-sharing emphasized in 2:44–45 and 4:32–5:10 outgrows apostolic supervision, requiring an expansion of leadership. This leads to Hellenist leaders, including Stephen, Philip, and eventually Saul of Tarsus. The apostolic church has survived the threat of sin’s infiltration (5:1–11) and persecution from the outside (5:17–42); it must now address the danger of internal cultural conflicts.

Luke might organize his account to echo an analogous situation in the Old Testament.⁶⁸³

⁶⁸² See Goulder, *Type*, 23, to which I have added the line about distributing goods. Luke continues here his themes of poverty and wealth (Hoyt, “Poor in Luke-Acts,” 222–25).

⁶⁸³ Goulder, *Type*, 56. For Luke’s grounding the mission of the seventy in Num 11:24–30 rather than Gen 10, see the argument in R. P. Menzies, “The Sending of the Seventy and Luke’s Purpose,” pages 87–113 in Alexander, May, and Reid, *Trajectories*, 95–99.

Mixed multitude hungry (Num 11:4)	Feeding in mixed territory (Luke 9:10)	Mixed multitude hungry (Acts 6:1)
Pressure of work forces delegating it to seventy (Num 11:24)	Appointment of seventy (or seventy-two) ⁶⁸⁴ (Luke 10:1)	Appointment of Seven (Acts 6:3)
70 after Moses	70 (72) after the Twelve (Luke 9:1–6)	Ministry of Twelve (Acts 1–5), then of Seven (Acts 6–8)
Requirement that leaders be full of Spirit (Num 11:25)	(implied, Luke 10:9)	Requirement that leaders be full of the Spirit (Acts 6:3, 5)

That the disciples were increasing (6:1) fits the pattern of other summaries (2:47; 6:7; 5:14). Growth, however, often brings growing pains, especially as it crosses cultural boundaries. The connection between this statement and what follows may suggest that, in the face of massive growth, the apostles could no longer provide detailed attention to the organized ministry of food distribution – any more than they could pray individually over all the supplicants who sought their help (Acts 5:15–16; cf. Luke 5:15–16, 19; 8:19; 19:3).

Luke emphatically favors respect and care for widows (Luke 2:37; 4:25–26; 7:12; 18:3–5; 21:2–3; Acts 9:39–41), following biblical models.⁶⁸⁵ Providing *food*⁶⁸⁶ for them also fits the community's shared meals (2:42).⁶⁸⁷

Greeks and Romans deemed gratitude the appropriate response to any benefaction, but complaints about inadequate benefactions are common in ancient sources. What is clear is that Luke's expression for *complained* (6:1) is negative both in his larger work (Luke 5:30; 15:2; 19:7; cf. 12:13) and in

⁶⁸⁴ If one adds Eldad and Medad to the seventy (Num 11:26–27), the seventy-two may echo the same passage.

⁶⁸⁵ E.g., Exod 22:22; Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19; Ps 68:5; 146:9; Prov 15:25; Is 1:17, 23; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5. In early Judaism, see, e.g., Jdt 9:4; Tob 1:8; Wis 2:10; Sir 35:17; 2 Macc 3:10; 8:28, 30; 2 En. 50:5–6; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.227, 240; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.308; *Sib. Or.* 3.242. Other ancient Near Eastern cultures warned against oppressing widows. Lucian, *Peregr.* 12 associates large numbers of widows and orphans with Jesus's movement (cf. 1 Tim 5:3; James 1:27).

⁶⁸⁶ Possibly implied in the "tables" of 6:2, though not specified in the Greek of 6:1. The proposal that these widows were discriminated against in serving at tables is less likely: this had been the apostles' role (6:2), and most widows in Luke-Acts and in biblical tradition are needy. Although not all widows were poor, this was their common status in ancient law and society (see B. B. Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989], 9–10; J.-U. Krause, *Witwen und Waisen im römischen Reich* [4 vols.; Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994–95]).

⁶⁸⁷ Essenes also reportedly ate together daily and ensured the meeting of all needs under leaders' supervision (1QS 6.19–20; CD 9.21–23; Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.10–11).

biblical precedent,⁶⁸⁸ including in a conflict that led to the appointment and Spirit-filling of seventy elders (Num 11:1, 16–17). If it is negative here, it might imply that they might have secured justice with the apostles more directly – although such a hearing is not the usual experience of overlooked minorities, even in religious circles.

Yet Luke's failure to clarify whether the complaining in 6:1 was justified probably suggests that it was; certainly Luke seems explicit about the neglect of these widows.⁶⁸⁹ The apostles were "Hebrews" (6:1) and they were the ones supervising the distribution (4:35), so they bore ultimate responsibility for solving the problem.

The apostles' neglect of the immigrant widows could be unintentional, due to cultural blind spots (cf. 10:28), an oversight in their oversight, so to speak. It might also reflect a tension in the larger environment. If many immigrants settled in Jerusalem in their older years, they might leave a disproportionate number of widows;⁶⁹⁰ certainly many immigrants came to Jerusalem as adults, in contrast to those locally born. Meanwhile, if charity was distributed locally through private means and synagogues,⁶⁹¹ and (most obviously) immigrant Jews had less of a local extended kin network on which to depend,⁶⁹² native Judeans may have received a larger share proportionately.

Luke neither invents the conflict nor denies it, but he does put the best face on it. Despite the sometimes controversial issues that divided early Christians, Luke portrays their assemblies to discuss such matters (6:2–6; 11:1–18; 15:5–29; cf. 21:18–26) as orderly, in contrast to the sometimes riotous public assemblies hostile to Christians (19:25–34; cf. 18:17; 21:27–29).⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁸ See Exod 16:7–9, 12; 17:3; Num 14:27, 29; 16:41; 17:5, 10; Ps 106:25; Sir 46:7.

⁶⁸⁹ The Greek term *hoti* is probably rightly translated here "because" rather than "that."

⁶⁹⁰ Greek husbands were often a decade older than wives; age disparity was probably less among even hellenized Jews (though cf. Philo, *Creation* 103). Wives predeceased husbands more frequently than the reverse, but this disparity predominated during child-bearing years, hence would have less demographic impact on older immigrants. As in later sources, some probably considered it pious to settle in the holy land; for preference for burial there, cf. already Josephus, *Ant.* 20.95.

⁶⁹¹ Cf. *t. B. Qam.* 11:3; *Demai* 3:16; also evidence from Aphrodisias; discussion in Capper, "Context," 350–52. We lack specifically pre-70 evidence for Jerusalem, except that the Theodotus inscription suggests that Jerusalem synagogues helped Diaspora pilgrims.

⁶⁹² For family support, cf. Hesiod, *W.D.* 188–89; Isaeus, *Menec.* 10; Lysias, *Or.* 24.6, §168; Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.19; *P.enteuxis* 26; Quintilian, *Inst.* 7.6.5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.45; *Sib. Or.* 2.273–75.

⁶⁹³ Ancient political discourse praised concord (see M. M. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 114–15, 126–27; comment on 15:25), and historians, while usually not

Naturally, this minority faith experienced the larger culture as more hostile than their internal gatherings.⁶⁹⁴ But while Luke focuses on the resolution, he leaves indications that original, genuine conflicts stood behind these assemblies' need for resolution (6:1; 11:2–3; 15:1, 5, 7; 21:21–22).

A Closer Look: Hebrews and Hellenists

A majority of scholars today contest the unduly speculative, nineteenth-century Tübingen school's contention that Jerusalem's Hellenist believers held a theology radically different from that of the rest of the church.⁶⁹⁵ Stephen clearly does not reject the law (7:2–53; against the *false* charge of 6:13–14), and Luke also applies the label to hellenized gentiles (the likelier reading in 11:20). Further, it is not "Hebrews" but other members of the immigrant community who react most fiercely to the Hellenist Christian message (6:9; 7:58; 9:29). Diaspora Jews respected the temple enough to pay the annual half-shekel tax (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.312), and those who settled in Jerusalem presumably respected it. At least initially, then, the difference is more sociological than theological.

Most scholars today see the distinction as a primarily linguistic one, between Greek and Aramaic speakers; this was what the term "Hellenists" often meant. Because Greek was the lingua franca of the urban eastern Mediterranean, probably most Jerusalemites and even Galileans knew some Greek.⁶⁹⁶ More scholars today contend that "Hebrews" may have known some Greek in addition to Aramaic, but "Hellenists" spoke only or mainly Greek.

Still, the distinction is probably not *exclusively* linguistic. Luke depicts at least one Hellenist, Saul (6:9; 7:58; 9:29), as speaking Aramaic relatively fluently even after years in the Diaspora (26:14). Moreover, one must ask *why* some residents of Jerusalem speak almost exclusively Greek. The term

deleting record of conflict, could emphasize positive role models. The latter was esp. true in apologetic historiography, such as Josephus's *Antiquities* or Acts.

⁶⁹⁴ Compare, e.g., rules for order in Qumran's 1QM with Qumran's depictions of their external oppressors (e.g., 1QpHab 9.9; 12.8; 4Q171 f3.10.4.8).

⁶⁹⁵ See esp. C. C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992).

⁶⁹⁶ The disciples' Lower Galilee spoke primarily Aramaic, but Greek is well-attested there. For Greek in Jerusalem, cf. M. Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991), 54–62; L. I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 94–95, 182. Many postcolonial bilingual settings today reflect the same dynamic, with a colonial trade language and language of education used less in more remote rural areas.

Hellenist can also apply to those who follow Greek customs (2 Macc 4:13), and in Acts might point to a distinction between native Judeans and immigrants from the Greek-speaking Diaspora (see already 2:5; cf. 4:36).⁶⁹⁷ This is not a matter of loyalties (6:9–11; 9:29) but of background.⁶⁹⁸ That hellenized immigrants are in view is confirmed by 6:9, where their unconverted counterparts identify themselves with a synagogue based on their immigrant status.⁶⁹⁹

Luke's primary interest is not defining the groups, however, but in showing a bridge to the gentile mission. Luke's Greek-speaking Diaspora audience would undoubtedly identify particularly with these Hellenists. ****

The just complaint of aggrieved women had to be heard (Num 27:1–11). Moreover, ancient readers would know that women, especially widows, could safely get away with complaining and even harassing authorities in ways that men could not;⁷⁰⁰ such demands were often their only means for securing redress against injustices.⁷⁰¹ The widows here may continue in the path of earlier biblical widows who heroically and unconventionally sought their rights.⁷⁰²

Rather than defending their apparently challenged honor, as would have been customary in the wider culture,⁷⁰³ the apostles seek to share the challenged responsibilities (Acts 6:3–4). Recognizing their limitations (Luke 4:43–44; 5:1, 3; cf. Mark 1:37–38, 45; 3:7, 9; 4:1, 34–36; 6:31–32, 45–46; 7:24; 8:27), they follow Jesus's model of delegation (Luke 9:1–2, 13–14; 10:1–2).

⁶⁹⁷ Evidence shows many Diaspora immigrants in Jerusalem; see S. Safrai, "Relations between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel," in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 193–94; D. A. Fiensy, "The Composition of the Jerusalem Church," pages 213–36 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 232.

⁶⁹⁸ Using the categories in J. M. G. Barclay, "Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?" *JSNT* 60 (1995): 89–120 (93–98), we may speak of their "acculturation" rather than "assimilation" or "accommodation."

⁶⁹⁹ It probably did, however, include second-generation members who had grown up in Jerusalem (cf. 22:3; 23:6).

⁷⁰⁰ See, e.g., Luke 18:2–5; 2 Sam 14:1–21; 20:16–22; 1 Kgs 1:11–16; 2:17; Matt 20:20; S. Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1988), 179; S. J. Simon, "Women Who Pleaded Causes before the Roman Magistrates," *CBull* 66 (3–4, 1990): 79–81.

⁷⁰¹ Widows were vulnerable without male defenders in the male arena of law (cf. Luke 20:47), hence warranted special protection (e.g., *P.Ryl.* 114.5).

⁷⁰² Cf. A. Merz, "How a Woman Who Fought Back and Demanded Her Rights Became an Importunate Widow: The Transformations of a Parable of Jesus," pages 49–86 in *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity* (ed. T. Holmén; LNTS 352; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 86 (cf. 65–70).

⁷⁰³ The norm was suppressing dissent. Exceptions (e.g., Polybius 1.32.1–9) are relatively rare.

The apostles invite the community of believers to choose seven ministers (6:3).⁷⁰⁴ Besides (or because of?) seven's common use as a sort of sacred number,⁷⁰⁵ seven was apparently a common number of leaders in many Judean communities (see Josephus, *Ant.* 4.214, 287; *War* 2.571). Although Luke often employs the title "the twelve" in his Gospel (e.g., Luke 8:1; 9:1, 12), he employs it in Acts only at 6:2 (for its sense, cf. comment on 1:15–26), probably to show the correspondence to the seven (6:3), which also becomes a title (21:8; cf. "the seventy-[two]" in Luke 10:1, 17).⁷⁰⁶

Both preaching and economic ministry to the needy are described as "ministries" here (though the NRSV renders this Greek term *diakonia* as *distribution* in 6:1 and *serving* in 6:4), and both require Spirit-filled leaders.⁷⁰⁷ Clearly, Luke's Gospel highly values ministry to the needy (Luke 4:18; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:22–23; 18:22; 19:8), and it continues in Acts, though Luke does not highlight it as directly (4:35; 11:29–30; 24:17). The apostles' distinctive commission, however, requires them to prioritize the message and prayer (cf. Luke 10:38–42, using *diakonia* in 10:40).⁷⁰⁸

The apostles were clearly immersed in biblical models (esp. Exod 18:19–21; Num 27:18–23; Deut 34:9). Those to whom Moses delegated some of his ministry of oversight were temporarily filled with the prophetic Spirit (Num 11:16–17, 24–25), but the prospective overseers here must be full of the Spirit already (Acts 6:3).⁷⁰⁹ The phrase *full of the Spirit and wisdom* echoes Deut 34:9, where Joshua was full of the Spirit of wisdom after Moses

⁷⁰⁴ The term translated *select* need not specify a vote (Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2), but given Luke's (and at this point the apostles') hellenized audience, a vote is the likeliest inference (among Jews, cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.22; *Life* 73; majority opinion in *War* 2.145; 1QS 5.2, 9; 6.19; *t. Ber.* 4:15). The specification of "men" here presupposes assumptions undoubtedly still held by the Twelve as well as by most of their culture (indeed, among Greeks and Romans only male citizens could vote), though the larger narrative's theological direction suggests a different possible future (see esp. 2:17–18; 18:26; 21:9).

⁷⁰⁵ Among gentiles, e.g., Aulus Gellius 3.10; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.1; among Jews, note the Sabbath; also see Philo, *Abr.* 28; *Creation* 99–100, 116.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. 1 Cor 15:5. Ancient communities often named groups, including of leaders, by their original number; for example, classical Athens at different times had "the Eleven" (cf. Acts 1:26; 2:14; Luke 24:9, 33), "the Thirty," "the Four Hundred," and "the Six Hundred"; Rome had groups of cultic officials called "the Fifteen," the "Seven," "the Ten" (e.g., Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.4.19), and so forth. For references, see Keener, *Acts*, 1:775–76.

⁷⁰⁷ Although church fathers such as Irenaeus and Cyprian applied the passage to what came to be deacons, this is not even the usual, broader sense of the cognate noun *diakonos* in the earliest sources (e.g., Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4). For *diakonos* to widows, cf. *T. Job* 10:2; 15:1.

⁷⁰⁸ Nevertheless, both the Twelve and Paul (11:29–30) engage in economic ministry before focusing more exclusively on preaching.

⁷⁰⁹ For the expression, cf. Turner, *Power*, 167–69.

laid hands on him;⁷¹⁰ Joshua was already a man in whom the Spirit was residing (Num 27:18). In Deut 1:13–16, Moses allows the people to choose overseers, whom he confirms (cf. Acts 6:3).⁷¹¹

Particularly relevant here, in Exod 18:21 Moses delegates authority to God-fearing persons whose character he knew, qualifications likely recalled in *men of good standing, full of the Spirit and wisdom* (Acts 6:3).⁷¹² Being of such good reputation as to be above reproach⁷¹³ was considered essential for leaders⁷¹⁴ and witnesses;⁷¹⁵ those wanting to enforce high standards must be known to live by them,⁷¹⁶ and a speaker of known integrity was also more persuasive.⁷¹⁷ Most importantly to a fragile minority community, bad reputation reflected also on one's associates.⁷¹⁸ Being of good reputation regarding money (as here and in Exod 18:21: they *hate dishonest gain*) was particularly important for leaders who would be handling it.⁷¹⁹

The apostles devoting themselves to God's word and prayer (6:4) echoes Moses's ministry of speaking for and to God after he delegates administrative responsibilities (Exod 18:19–20; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 3.68–73). *Serving the word* (6:4) involves proclamation and teaching (e.g., Acts 2:41; 4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 14, 25; 10:36; 11:1). The apostles also pursued corporate (Acts

⁷¹⁰ For linking the Spirit with wisdom for a task, cf. also Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Sir 39:6. Wisdom was essential for leaders (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:9; Ezra 7:25; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.186–87; *Life* 278; “full of sense” in Diodorus Siculus 18.7.3). The Spirit of wisdom might also enable these seven managers to discern deception (cf. Acts 5:3).

⁷¹¹ For diverse forms of authorization in Acts, cf. 1:21–26; 14:23; suggesting flexible and pragmatic rather than fixed forms of early Christian leadership.

⁷¹² Lists of qualifications constituted a conventional literary form (cf. 1 Tim 3:2–7), applicable, e.g., to various civic offices (e.g., Aristotle, *Pol.* 7.8.5–6, 1329a), delegates (*Let. Aris.* 46), and even for the best midwives (Soranus, *Gynec.* 1.1). Lists of qualifications appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls (CD 10.6–7; 14.7, 9) and later in rabbinic literature (e.g., *t. Hag.* 2:9; *Sanh.* 7:1).

⁷¹³ The sense of the term translated *of good standing* here, as in Acts 10:22; 22:12; cf. 22:5; 26:5; Luke 4:22.

⁷¹⁴ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 18; Valerius Maximus 8.15.3; *Let. Aris.* 280; *CJJ* 1:13, §9; 1:83, §119; 1:276, §353.

⁷¹⁵ Apuleius, *Apol.* 61–62; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.219; *Life* 256.

⁷¹⁶ Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.1.2; 2.3.2.4. A truly virtuous person should be above even suspicion (Aeschines, *Tim.* 49; Plutarch, *Caes.* 10.6), and certainly above *consistently* bad reputation (Aeschines, *Tim.* 126–29; Cicero, *Sest.* 9.20).

⁷¹⁷ *Rhet. Alex.* 38, 1445b.30–34.

⁷¹⁸ E.g., Xenophon, *Apol.* 31; Cicero, *Cael.* 4.10; Martial, *Epig.* 2.56; Plutarch, *Themist.* 2.6; Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.4; Sir 22:5.

⁷¹⁹ Cf. Aeschines, *Tim.* 56; Polybius 10.22.5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.58.3; Suetonius, *Tit.* 7.1; Tacitus, *Agr.* 6; 4Q424 f1.10; *t. Seqal.* 2:2, 24; *Sipre Deut.* 79.1.1; 1 Tim 3:3; *Did.* 11.12; 15.1; *Pol. Phil.* 11.1–2.

1:14, 24; 2:42, 46–47; cf. 3:1; 4:24–30; 6:6; 8:15) and private (9:40; 10:9; 11:5) prayer,⁷²⁰ following Jesus's example (Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:32) and instruction (11:2; 18:1; 19:46; 21:36; 22:40).

The community welcomes their proposed solution of new and appropriate leadership (6:5).⁷²¹ These were not simply *any* new leaders, however. Although only a minority of Judean residents had Greek names, all *seven* of the new leaders have Greek names (Acts 6:5).⁷²² This cannot be coincidence; even in Rome, where three-quarters of all Jewish inscriptions are in Greek, only about one-third of Jews' names were Greek.⁷²³

The Seven are not only Hellenists; they are very *conspicuously* Hellenists. The community selected (6:3, 5) and the apostles blessed (6:6) members of the offended minority group. As members of the minority, the new leaders could better understand the issues that caused the offense, as well as bring assurance that the minority's voice was heard and trusted. Similarly, in Acts 15, the church seeks a consensus solution, at least sufficient for believers' working agreement.

But again, these were not merely *any* members of the minority group, but those who could be trusted to put God's work first (6:3). Because the new leaders are *full of the Spirit and wisdom* (6:3), members of both subcultures could trust them to pursue equity rather than factional interests.

After introducing the Seven, Luke will turn more detailed attention to both Stephen (6:8–7:60) and Philip (8:4–40). That Stephen was "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (6:5) links him with the requirement in 6:3 but also portends the Spirit-led conflict he would soon endure (6:10; 7:55; cf. 9:17, 20, 23; Luke 4:1–2). Unknown to the apostles, the bicultural leaders from the church's current minority, somewhat at home in two different cultural spheres, would form the bridge to the majority of the church's future.

Although Nicolaus, unlike Stephen and Philip, does not recur in Luke's narrative, he merits some attention. "Nicolaus" or "Nicolas" was a

⁷²⁰ The Greek expression rendered here *devote . . . to prayer* appears also in 1:14; 2:42; cf. also Rom 12:12; Col 4:2.

⁷²¹ Cf. 2 Sam 3:36; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.22. Cf. the diverse and Spirit-filled leaders in Acts 13:1.

⁷²² Indeed, "Stephen" is almost unattested for Palestinian Jews; "Nicanor" is so far attested for first-century Jews only in the Diaspora; "Timon" and "Parmentas" are nowhere else attested for Jews (M. H. Williams, "Names," 98–99, 110–12). Cf. Moses's selection of judges from *all* Israel in Exod 18:25.

⁷²³ Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 107–8. Cf. also the diversity of names in *Let. Aris.* 47–50; later, cf. the observation about gentile names in *y. Git.* 1:1, §3.

common Greek name, not surprising for a convert from Antioch.⁷²⁴ That in this list only Nicolaus's place of origin is noted (though cf. 13:1), and that he is from Antioch, points the reader's attention toward the city to which the narrative's action will soon shift (11:19–30; 13:1–3). Most significantly, he is a proselyte, a former gentile now not only in the church (cf. 2:11), but in its leadership. This foretaste of diversity points the way forward to the later diverse leadership team in Nicolaus's home city of Antioch (13:1), as well as eventually to gentiles who had not first become proselytes (8:27–40; 10:1–48; 11:20–21).

In 6:6, the apostles add their blessing as they later do to Philip's ministry in Samaria (8:14–17), commissioning with prayer (as also in 13:3; probably 14:23). Laying on hands may evoke blessings from patriarchs (Gen 48:14)⁷²⁵ and Jesus (Luke 18:15–16), and here especially Moses's commissioning of Joshua (Num 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9).⁷²⁶ In early Christianity laying on hands for commissioning seemed to involve the activity of the Spirit, which could include prophecy and spiritual endowment (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6–7; cf. 1 Tim 1:18).

Luke's summary statement in 6:7 underlines the continuing, irrepressible spread of the message of Christ (cf. other summary statements in Acts 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31; Luke 4:14, 37; 7:17), something like a narrative refrain fitting the work's theme (Acts 1:8).⁷²⁷ Nothing, even internal conflicts (6:1), hinders the church's growth; the following narrative will show persecution temporarily decimating the local church yet disseminating the movement all the more (8:1–4). Indeed, echoing the history of God's people in the OT, 6:7 evokes the Israelites' multiplication in Egypt despite duress (Exod 1:7; cf. Acts 7:17; 12:24).⁷²⁸

Luke indicates that, despite the aristocratic priests' opposition, even many priests, probably mostly nonaristocratic ones, were embracing the faith.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁴ Antioch included many Greek converts to Judaism (Josephus, *War* 7.44–45); some proselytes also lived in Jerusalem (Fiensy, "Composition," 232).

⁷²⁵ Cf. *Jub.* 25:14; *Jos. Asen.* 8:9; 21:4–6.

⁷²⁶ Cf. also Num 8:10–11; and, in later sources, rabbinic ordination in D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1956), 207–10, 229–46.

⁷²⁷ Recapitulating an argument was common at the end of a section (e.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 3.9.31; 1 Cor 14:39–40); many historical works include summary statements (e.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 3.5.25; 4.8.19; in biblical historiography, see Rosner, "Biblical History," 76).

⁷²⁸ Possibly also to a wider pattern in the Pentateuch (Gen 1:22, 28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4; Lev 26:9; cf. Jer 3:16; 23:3).

⁷²⁹ "Obeying the faith" entails embracing the message of Christ (Rom 6:16–17; 10:16; 15:18; 2 Thess 1:8), which in turn entails obeying it (Rom 1:5; 16:25).

For Luke's Diaspora audience, probably priests from any economic stratum would appear to have status (cf. Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.13; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.32–33). And despite Luke's disdain for the corrupt high priestly families (cf. 4:1; perhaps Luke 10:31), Luke honors priests otherwise; he even opens his narrative with a pious priestly family (Luke 1:5; cf. 5:14; 17:14).⁷³⁰ That "many" priests followed the faith need not be an exaggeration; there were probably between two thousand (Neh 11:10–14, much earlier) and ten times that figure (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.108, though Josephus is never one to underestimate numbers). Because of priests' association with the temple, Luke can also show the falsehood of the charge against Stephen at 6:13–14.

Bridging Horizons: Minority Voices

In contrast to the Council, which (like most institutions) preserved the vested interests of tradition (5:28), the believing community here proves flexible and ready to adapt to the new situation.⁷³¹ Those at least somewhat at home in more than one cultural sphere form here a bridge to the church's future.

This passage involves both age-old issues of intercultural encounters and defining leadership in the most workable forms.⁷³² Leaders can share leadership, including with Spirit-led members of culturally marginal minorities. Trustworthy indigenous leadership may promote growth among such minorities greater than that experienced among the original majority. In much of the West, for example, minority cultures supply the current largest demographic in church growth. Many parts of Christendom still fail to heed less powerful voices in their midst: often women, in very conservative churches; ethnic or cultural minorities; their youngest or elderly members; the suffering; and so forth.⁷³³ Perhaps particularly conspicuous is this passage's challenge to us regarding immigrant fellow believers. ****

⁷³⁰ For the piety of many priests, see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 14.65–68. Priestly aristocrats later exploited poorer priests (*Ant.* 20.181, 206–7), for whom tithe support was already inadequate (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.153–54; *m. Demai* passim). Poorer priests might work as stone cutters, in agriculture, or selling oil; more influential priests likely served as scribes and judges (Deut 17:9; 21:5; 2 Chron 15:3; Ezek 44:24; Mal 2:7; *Jub.* 31:15; Sir 45:16–17; Josephus, *Life* 197; *Ag. Ap.* 2.187; Diodorus Siculus 40.3.5).

⁷³¹ W. H. Willimon, *Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1988), 58.

⁷³² For Luke, leadership qualifications include moral and spiritual readiness, and increasing growth invites increasing specialization.

⁷³³ Cf. analogies in González, *Acts*, 92–93; Y. L. Hertig, "Cross-Cultural Mediation: From Exclusion to Inclusion, Acts 6:1–7; also 5:33–42," pages 59–72 in *Mission in Acts: Ancient*

6:8–7:1: MINISTRY AND OPPOSITION

After introducing the seven Hellenists in 6:1–6 (especially 6:5), Luke focuses on two of them: Stephen (6:8–8:1a) and Philip (8:1b–40). Commissioned by the apostles (6:6), these Hellenists now expand the apostles' sphere of ministry theologically (ch. 7) and geographically and culturally (ch. 8). In so doing, they are led by the Spirit to push forward toward the work's goal specified by Jesus in 1:8. Luke could know something about Stephen's ministry from Philip (21:8) and the essential focus of his final speech and martyrdom from Paul (cf. 22:20), although Luke would select from and develop this information in ways suitable to his cohesive narrative.

Luke focuses in the present unit on Stephen's ministry and especially the opposition (6:8–15). This unit continues many of Luke's interests, such as persecution, social and evangelistic ministry, and signs. Stephen's wisdom in 6:10 recalls the description in 6:3 and may also evoke Joseph and Moses, of whom he speaks (7:10, 22, the only other uses of this term in Acts).⁷³⁴ That no one *could withstand* his *wisdom* (6:10) recalls both Jesus's model (Luke 20:8, 26, 39–40) and his promise (12:11–12; 21:12–15). Interestingly, whereas Stephen's accusers oppose him, they never answer him (Acts 7:54–58); he has the narrative's last words (7:59–60).

Although some date Stephen's martyrdom to the period just after Pilate's departure (36–37 CE), this does not fit Pauline chronology (Gal 1:18; 2:1); it was likelier simply a mob lynching when (as during most of the year) Pilate was in Caesarea rather than in Jerusalem.

Many details of Stephen's martyrdom evoke that of Jesus.⁷³⁵

1. Trial before the high priest/Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53; Luke 22:66; Acts 6:12)
2. Heavenly Son of Man at the Father's right hand (Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56)
3. Committal of spirit (*only* Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59)
4. Cry with a loud voice (Mark 15:34, 37; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:60)
5. Prayer for forgiveness of persecutors (*only* in Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)
6. Burial by the righteous (Mark 15:43–47; Luke 23:50–56; Acts 8:2)
7. Righteous mourners (Luke 23:27; Acts 8:2; not as close)

Narratives in Contemporary Context (ed. R. L. Gallagher and P. Hertig; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

⁷³⁴ The Spirit of wisdom could involve not only administrative (6:3) and leadership skills (Deut 34:9; Isa 11:2), but craftsmanship (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:31) and, as here, rhetorical skills (1 Cor 1:20; 2:1, 4–5, 13; 12:8).

⁷³⁵ Following here esp. Witherington, *Acts*, 253; Green, "Acts," 745.

8. Although outside Jesus's passion, a sort of transfiguration (Luke 9:29; Acts 6:15)

Some potential parallels of which Luke knew, however, are missing in Luke's Gospel.⁷³⁶

1. False witnesses (Mark 14:56–57; Acts 6:13)⁷³⁷
2. Testimony about the temple's destruction (Mark 14:58; Acts 6:14)
3. Temple "made with hands" (Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48)
4. High priest's question (Mark 14:61; not in Luke, though cf. Luke 22:67; Acts 7:1)
5. Blasphemy charge (Mark 14:64; Acts 6:11)

Signs and wonders (6:8) throughout Luke-Acts are not limited to apostles. The language evokes the miracles God performed in the exodus through Moses (7:36); Luke views the spread of the gospel as an event of analogous salvation-historical importance. The Spirit empowers not only the signs, but also Stephen's persuasive speech (6:10), leaving his challengers limited options for silencing him (6:10–13).

A Closer Look: Synagogues

Some standard features of later synagogue architecture had not yet developed in the first century, complicating identification of buildings so used. But archaeologists have identified some, and literary sources are explicit. Josephus often speaks of "synagogues,"⁷³⁸ though he sometimes calls them "prayer houses" (Josephus, *Life* 277, 280, 293), a title familiar also in Philo.⁷³⁹

Josephus insists that the law required Jews to assemble each Sabbath to study Torah (*Ag. Ap.* 2.175) and pray (*Ag. Ap.* 1.209).⁷⁴⁰ They also served

⁷³⁶ Luke probably retold his passion story numerous times, but scholars differ as to why he omits these parallels. Does he omit them deliberately because he would treat them in Acts (but then why only these)? Was he so familiar with the passion story that he forgot that he left them out? Does he presuppose that his audience knows the familiar story sufficiently as to take some for granted?

⁷³⁷ Luke's knowledge of the false witnesses is probably implied in Luke 22:71, however.

⁷³⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 19.300, 305; *War* 2.285, 289; 7.44.

⁷³⁹ Philo, *Flacc.* 41, 45–49, 53, 122; *Embassy* 134, 137–38, 148, 152, 157, 165, 191, 346, 371, all addressing gentile abuse of Jewish prayer houses but Philo uses "synagogue" in *Good Person* 81.

⁷⁴⁰ Cf. also Josephus, *War* 2.289; *Ant.* 16.43; as houses of study, cf. *CIJ* 2:333, §1404. As Sanders, *Judaism*, 199 points out, Philo recognizes a "house of prayer" (*Embassy* 132), that Jews learned Torah in an assembly on the Sabbath (*Hypoth.* 7.12–13; cf. *Spec. Laws*

other functions as community centers. A public place of prayer in Tiberias (one of Galilee's two large cities) functioned as the meeting place for the entire citizen assembly (*Life* 277–78). Before 70 they seem to have functioned as community courts; collection points for charity⁷⁴¹ and temple funds;⁷⁴² hostels (as in the Theodotus inscription); and banquet halls.⁷⁴³ ****

Although scholars argue for multiple synagogues in 6:9,⁷⁴⁴ most scholars now read the grammar in support of a single “Synagogue of the *Libertini* [former Roman slaves],” who emigrated to the holy land from these various regions. Although people did not usually boast of slave ancestry,⁷⁴⁵ in Jerusalem the title *Libertini* probably marked high status.

The use of the Latin *libertini* probably suggests not just any freedpersons, but freedpersons of Roman citizens, who, under frequent conditions, would therefore have been made citizens themselves.⁷⁴⁶ The majority of Jewish Roman citizens were descended from Judeans enslaved by the general Pompey in 63 BCE but subsequently freed in Rome. So long as they married among themselves, their descendants remained Roman citizens (though not technically *libertini*), and they were plentiful in Rome.⁷⁴⁷

Diaspora Jews from many regions (listed in 6:9) made this synagogue their home, perhaps especially Jewish Roman citizens whose ancestors, in the century or so since Pompey, had migrated eastward to other cities and finally settled in their ancestral homeland.⁷⁴⁸ One Greek-speaking, Diaspora-related synagogue in Jerusalem, may offer an analogy to the

2.62–63; *Good Person* 81). First-century Jews believed Moses required this (Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.12–13; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.175; *LAB* 11:8; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 78).

⁷⁴¹ Matt 6:2; *t. B. Bat.* 8:14; *Sabb.* 16:22; *Ter.* 1:10.

⁷⁴² Philo, *Embassy* 156; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.167–68; 14.215.

⁷⁴³ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.214–16; 16.164. Throughout this sentence I follow L. I. Levine, “The Second Temple Synagogue: The Formative Years,” pages 7–31 in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. I. Levine; Philadelphia, PA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1986), 14.

⁷⁴⁴ Jerusalem had multiple synagogues (Acts 24:12), though later rabbinic estimates of their number (480; e.g., *y. Meg.* 3:1, §3; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:7) may be fanciful.

⁷⁴⁵ Cf. Gaius, *Inst.* 1.11; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.47; *m. Hor.* 3:8; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 105.

⁷⁴⁶ See, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 4.23.3; Petronius, *Sat.* 57; Gaius, *Inst.* 1.12, 17.

⁷⁴⁷ Philo reported as common knowledge (even in Alexandria, and certainly in Rome) that most of the Jewish community on the other side of the Tiber was descended from captives who had been freed and maintained their observances (*Embassy* 155) and had synagogues there (156). Travel to and from Rome was frequent (e.g., Josephus, *Life* 13).

⁷⁴⁸ Limited evidence from later rabbis suggests that they believed that Diaspora Jews from places such as Tarsus and (more certainly) Alexandrians had synagogue communities in Jerusalem.

synagogue of freedpersons in 6:9. An inscription identifies a certain Theodotus as expanding a pre-70 Jerusalem synagogue complex founded by his grandfather (*CIJ* 2:332–35, §1404).

Given the name of Theodotus's father, Vettenos, the synagogue was probably originally founded by a Jew from Rome. The name Vettenos may refer to the *gens Vetteni*, suggesting freed status; freed slaves often adopted the family names of the patron who freed them. This could be, as some suggest, the same synagogue identified in Acts 6:9, though we cannot be certain. It at least offers an analogy of a Diaspora synagogue in Jerusalem with potentially prestigious freedperson roots.

The more direct origins of many synagogue members (6:9) include North Africa (Alexandria and Cyrene) and Asia Minor (Cilicia and the Roman province of Asia). Alexandria (cf. 18:24) had the largest Jewish community of any city in the empire apart from Jerusalem; its Jewish elite were thoroughly hellenized yet retained respect for the temple. Egypt's proximity to Judea probably suggests that Alexandria appears first in the list because it constituted the largest proportion of immigrant members. Cyrene had a significant Jewish community (cf. 2 Macc 2:23), and Acts will soon address Cyrenian proclaimers (11:20; 13:1; cf. 2:10; Luke 23:26); perhaps some had once been affiliated with this synagogue. Acts will later highlight Paul's ministry in Asia (Acts 19:10), as well as opposition from other Jews there (19:9; 21:27–28). In particular, however, Luke's mention of Cilicia may prepare his audience for a particular Roman citizen (16:37) from Cilicia's capital, Tarsus (9:11; 21:39; 22:3).⁷⁴⁹

Like distinct cultural groups in many cities, they may have exercised a degree of autonomy; Stephen apparently belonged to their community. Escalating charges against Stephen to another level, however, required bringing him before the Council. That *they stirred up the people* (6:12) fits riotous persecutors elsewhere in Acts (13:50; 14:2; 21:27; esp. the cognate in 21:30).⁷⁵⁰

The charges against Stephen in 6:11–14 are volatile; invective and denunciation characterized much ancient rhetoric.⁷⁵¹ Plaintiffs sometimes prosecuted those who incurred their enmity on unrelated matters;⁷⁵² sometimes

⁷⁴⁹ For Jews there, cf. Philo, *Embassy* 281; *CIJ* 2:39–48, §§782–95.

⁷⁵⁰ Ironically such persecutors accuse Paul of the same (17:6; 24:5; cf. Luke 23:2), which Luke views as blaming the victim.

⁷⁵¹ E.g., Lucian, *Critic* passim; *Prof. P.S.* 22; *Phal.* 1, ¶14; see Marshall, *Enmity*, 46–69.

⁷⁵² E.g., Ps.-Lysias, *Or.* 9.10, §115; *Vit. Aes.* 127.

prosecutors stirred audiences' passions concerning the terrible charges, without actually proving them applicable to defendants.⁷⁵³

The *false witnesses* of Acts 6:13 contrast with the *men of good standing* (literally, "favorably attested") in 6:3, and with God's true witnesses (1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41; 13:31; Stephen in 22:20). Since witnesses testified under oath, and swearing falsely by definition desecrated the divine name, their charge that Stephen blasphemed God (6:11) appears deeply ironic!⁷⁵⁴ Hiring false witnesses to get someone stoned (6:13; 7:58–59) also recalls the behavior of someone like Jezebel (1 Kgs 21:8–15).

In principle, ancient societies opposed false testimony,⁷⁵⁵ and some legal systems demanded for false witnesses the punishments they had intended for their neighbors (which in this case would be death).⁷⁵⁶ Jewish tradition included separate examination of witnesses to test them for falsehood.⁷⁵⁷ If they contradicted each other even in matters of detail, their testimony was thrown out.⁷⁵⁸ But hellenistic judicial oratory often favored whatever testimony, true or false, that would help one win a case.⁷⁵⁹ People knew that the witnesses against Socrates were false (Xenophon, *Apol.* 24), and Christians knew the same for those who testified against Jesus (Mark 14:55–59).

Luke reinforces the character of the false charges against Stephen by mostly repeating them in different words (except the more general, "against God"):

6:11	Against God	Against Moses
6:13	Against this Holy Place (the Temple)	Against the Law
6:14	Destroy this place	Destroy the customs

⁷⁵³ J. Hall, "Oratorical Delivery and the Emotions: Theory and Practice," pages 218–34 in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (ed. W. Dominik and J. Hall; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 232.

⁷⁵⁴ In Greek, the verb *blasphemeō* can include any speaking against (thus also against Moses here), but the narrowest Jewish application involved profaning the divine name (cf. Lev 24:11–16; *m. Sanh.* 7:5).

⁷⁵⁵ E.g., Isaeus, *Hagnias* 46; Justin, *Epit.* 32.2.9; Sallust, *Cat.* 16.2; *Speech of Philippus* 15; Apuleius, *Apol.* 59–60.

⁷⁵⁶ See Diodorus Siculus 1.77.2; Ps.-Quintilian, *Decl.* 331.2, 5; Deut 18:18–19; 11QT 61.7–11; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Mak.* 1:6–7; *t. Sanh.* 6:6; *Sipre Deut.* 190.5.1; *Hammurabi* 1–4, 11, esp. 1, 3, 11).

⁷⁵⁷ Sus 48–62; *m. Abot* 1:9; *Sanh.* 3:6; 5:1–4; *t. Sanh.* 6:3, 6; *Sipre Deut.* 149.1.1–2; 189.1.3.

⁷⁵⁸ E.g., Sus 51–52; *Sipre Deut.* 93.2.1; 189.1.3; among gentiles, Cicero, *Vat.* 1.3; *Att.* 2.24.

⁷⁵⁹ *Rhet. Alex.* 15, 1431b.37–1432a.3–11; 17, 1432a.33–1432b.10; Plutarch, *Cim.* 14.2; *Alc.* 20.5; Hermogenes, *Issues* 45.10–20.

Ethnic religion and nationalism together reacted potently against challenges to identity, real or imagined, including a threat to a city's central cult (19:27). Although a few Jews viewed the temple as desecrated or even expected its destruction (cf. *T. Moses* 5:4; 6:8–9; 1QpHab 9.6–7), it united most Jews.⁷⁶⁰ Probably the most magnificent temple in the Mediterranean world,⁷⁶¹ Jerusalem's temple was also central to its economy (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.219). The temple establishment, including many members of the Council (6:12), reacted harshly to public challenges to the temple (Josephus, *War* 6.300–9; cf. Luke 19:45–47; Jer 20:1–2).

Torah united Jews even more. The law was central Judean life (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.60). Sages could deem nonexistence better than inability to recite Torah (*t. Hag.* 1:2); or lack of Torah as deathworthy (*m. Abot* 1:13); or Torah study more essential than priesthood or kingship (*Abot* 6:5). Diaspora Jews also largely observed it (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.282–84); one claims that Jews would die ten thousand deaths rather than violate the law (Philo, *Hypoth.* 6.9).⁷⁶² “Customs” may appear here as roughly synonymous with laws (cf. 2 Macc 12:38; Luke 2:27; Acts 15:1).⁷⁶³ In any case people usually valued ancient customs and viewed innovation as suspicious,⁷⁶⁴ and Jews considered abandoning their customs a terrible offense (1 Macc 1:41–43; 2 Macc 4:12; 11:25; 4 Macc 18:5). They would not “blaspheme” (speak against) Moses (Josephus, *War* 2.145, 152).

Stephen will refute the charge that he opposes the law by building his case on it (see Acts 7 passim); indeed, he will return the charge against his accusers (7:51, 53)! More ambiguous is his response to the temple charge. If Stephen does not precisely denounce *this holy place* (6:13; cf. 7:7; 21:28), he nevertheless urges from Scripture that foreign sites could warrant the same title (7:33, citing Exod 3:5); no temple could be uniquely God's *place* (Acts 7:49, citing Isa 66:1). The charge that Stephen opposes the temple draws plausibility from Jesus's actions (Luke 19:45) and

⁷⁶⁰ See, e.g., Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.76; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.19, 312; *Sib. Or.* 3.575–79; *m. Kelim* 1:6–9; *Mek. Pisha* 1.48ff.

⁷⁶¹ See Josephus, *War* 5.184–227; Sanders, *Judaism*, 55–69; for its fame abroad, cf. 2 Macc 2:22.

⁷⁶² Others often thus granted them the legal right to organize themselves according to their ancestral laws (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 14.216, 223, 227, 263; 16.172; 19.310–11).

⁷⁶³ Pharisees accepted many oral traditions (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297, 408; *m. Abot* 1:1) but Stephen's critics here are not specifically Pharisees, and Sadducees, who dominated the Council, rejected Pharisaic traditions.

⁷⁶⁴ *Rhet. Alex.* 2, 1423a.32–1423b.12; Cicero, *Resp.* 5.1.2; *Res Gestae* 2.8; 6.1; 8.5; Quintilian, *Decl.* 339.10; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.77, 81; *Ag. Ap.* 2.269.

prophecy (21:5–6) against the temple, which Stephen may have been teaching (cf. John 2:19). It also foreshadows later charges against Paul (Acts 21:28).

Jesus's agency in the temple's destruction appears in the NT only as a false charge (here and in Mark 14:58) – except indirectly as judgment for rejecting him (Luke 19:44).⁷⁶⁵ Luke respects the temple (e.g., Acts 2:46; 5:20; 7:44; 21:26; Luke 2:27, 37, 46); but against some (*Let. Aris.* 100–1; *Philo, Spec. Laws* 1.76), it was not eternal.

Stephen's transformation in Acts 6:15 may be less literal⁷⁶⁶ than that of Jesus (Luke 9:29) or Moses (Exod 34:29–30, 35), but like Moses (cf. Acts 7:30–31, 35) he will witness the Lord's glory (7:55–56).⁷⁶⁷ Far from opposing Moses (6:11), Stephen fits his pattern, whereas his accusers resemble those who opposed Moses (7:27, 35–37, 51–52). And far from opposing the law given through angels (7:53; cf. 7:30, 35, 38), he even resembles an angel.

The high priest's question in 7:1 evokes the charges of 6:11–14, setting the stage for Stephen's response in 7:2–53. Those familiar with Jewish tradition might recall analogous interrogations from Israel's enemies and responses from Jewish martyrs.⁷⁶⁸

7:2–8: ABRAHAM THE ALIEN

Acts 7:2–53 recounts Stephen's countercharge (7:2–53). Luke offers a climactic example of Stephen's preaching by the Spirit (6:10), hence like a prophet (7:51). Particularly extensively in Acts 7, Luke elaborates the sort of content in Jesus's christological interpretation of Scripture presumably suggested in Luke 24:27, 44–45. This includes the suffering-exaltation pattern in Israel's rejected deliverers (cf. Acts 7:3–5, 9, 27–28)⁷⁶⁹ and probably how God typically surprised his people in how he fulfilled his promises to them (e.g., Gen 17:17–18; 18:12; 37:7, 9; 41:14; 42:6). Acting as a prophet (7:52) empowered by the Spirit (6:10; 7:51), Stephen reads from the

⁷⁶⁵ Probably also Matt 23:37–38//Luke 13:34–35; cf. Mark 12:6–9; Matt 23:31–36//Luke 11:48–51. Others viewed the temple's destruction as judgment for *something*, after the fact (e.g., Josephus, *War* 6.288–315; *Pesiq. Rab.* 26:6).

⁷⁶⁶ Unless it falls in the range of irresistible miracles that enraged his opponents (Acts 6:8, 10) or they attribute it to magic (which often emphasized transformations; e.g., Apuleius, *Metam.* 1.9; 2.1, 5, 30). But there is precedent for this hyperbole (1 Sam 29:9; Esth 15:13 LXX).

⁷⁶⁷ This experience and Stephen's "transfiguration" here frame his defense speech.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. 2 Macc 7:7–9, 24–38; 4 Macc 5:6–13; 6:16; 8:10; 9:4.

⁷⁶⁹ Foundational to understanding the gospel story (Luke 24:46; Acts 3:18; 17:2–3; 26:22–23; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 1:11).

vantage point of a prophetic remnant against a hostile society (Acts 7:52; Luke 4:24; 6:22–23, 26; 11:47–50; 13:28, 34; cf. 21:12).⁷⁷⁰ He also understands his own era as continuing the salvation-historical story.⁷⁷¹

Ancient historians wrote speeches differently than we do today. No one expected verbatim transcripts; at the same time, Stephen was stoned for something he was teaching beyond the teachings of the Twelve, and members of the Jerusalem church (such as Philip and Manaen and especially Luke's chief informant Paul) surely had a good idea about what that was.⁷⁷² Stephen was not simply martyred for a boring history lesson.

Although Stephen builds rapport in the first part of his speech, as hellenistic rhetoric (and common sense) advised (esp. 7:2–34),⁷⁷³ from the start Stephen is answering both charges (that he opposes law and temple; 6:11–14). Stephen uses the conventional rhetorical form of historical retrospective, tracing the history of Israel in a manner relevant to the current situation.⁷⁷⁴ Some earlier biblical and early Jewish retellings emphasize the need for repentance (Neh 9:6–31),⁷⁷⁵ or preceded the speaker's death (1 Macc 2:51–60). Judicial speeches typically began with a narration of events leading up to the present situation,⁷⁷⁶ events that for Stephen include Israel's entire history. This use of narrative fits both Stephen's situation and Luke's narrative interests.⁷⁷⁷ As noted in this

⁷⁷⁰ He even adapts an OT form; cf. B. Peterson, "Stephen's Speech as a Modified Prophetic Rîb Formula," *JETS* 57 (2, 2014): 351–69.

⁷⁷¹ As in other eschatological restoration movements such as the Qumran community. See Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 49–56.

⁷⁷² People in antiquity often remembered the key points of major speeches (see here G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984], 122), and certainly key themes of teachers. Given his association with Paul and (for at least several days) with Philip, Luke should have had plenty of material for all of Acts 6–8, however he may have thought best to package it. Despite Acts 8:5–25, earlier proposals of a Samaritan source here are improbable.

⁷⁷³ Cf., e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442a.22–1442b.27; Cicero, *De Oratore* 1.31.143; Lucian, *Hist.* 53; Heraclitus, *Hom. Prob.* 59.7; *Sipre Deut.* 343.1.2. To proceed relatively uninterrupted as far as he does, Stephen must initially use *insinuatō* (for examples, see Cicero, *Agr.* 24.63–64; *Pis.* 2.3) rather than direct attack; orators sometimes reserved the most controversial part of the speech for the end (e.g., Demosthenes, *Cor.*).

⁷⁷⁴ Cf. 13:17–31; Josh 24:2–14; 1 Macc 2:52–60; Sir 44:16–50:26; Wis 10:1–11:16; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.87; *War* 5.379–411; 4 *Ezra* 3:4–36; 14:29–31; CD 2.18–5.6; Heb 11:4–32; 1 *Clem.* 4.1–5.7.

⁷⁷⁵ Cf. Ps 78:1–66; perhaps Ezek 20:5–29; also worship (Ps 105; 106; 135:8–12; 136:10–22) and other matters (e.g., 3 Macc 2:4–7; 1 *En.* 83–90). Cf. Dunn, *Acts*, 89.

⁷⁷⁶ E.g., Cicero, *Quinct.* 3.11–9.33; Tacitus, *Dial.* 19; Deut 1–3; 1 Sam 12:8–11. The proofs may repeat events, but they are not arranged chronologically as in the *narratio* (Cicero, *Quinct.* 11.37–27.85).

⁷⁷⁷ Use of narratives within larger narratives is a technique as old as Homer. Stephen's speech barely gets past this narrative introduction (7:2–50).

commentary's introduction, historians found patterns in history that they believed to be divine. In special historical crisis moments, historians sometimes include speeches tracing earlier history, and so locate current events in a broader context.

Against many commentators, who strangely side more with Stephen's accusers, Stephen does not oppose the Torah. He answers the law charge both by building his case on the law's authority and by the conventional rhetorical technique of returning charges against accusers, climaxing explicitly in 7:51–53 with their defiance of God's word.⁷⁷⁸ God himself is the consistent character throughout the speech, and, relevant to the setting of Jesus's first Jewish followers, Stephen highlights key figures in Israel's history who in following God had to defy the consensus of their people in their generation (7:3–4, 9, 25–28, 39–43).

The speech contrasts intransigent human power and institutions, such as those before whom Stephen is tried, with the activity of the living God through those who dynamically follow him, such as Stephen. (Certainly it does not contrast Jews and gentiles, like those who read it as anti-Jewish.)⁷⁷⁹ God gave the holy land, but not every generation experienced that promise (7:5–6), and its purpose was not as an end in itself but for divine worship (7:7). It came through Abraham's faithful obedience to God's new revelation (7:2–3), not dependent on the sort of institutions, place, or power that Stephen's audience took for granted. God fulfilled his purposes for Joseph, though the latter was outnumbered and overpowered by his brothers (7:9), just as God's movement in Stephen's day lacked the prestige and power of its opponents (cf. 6:12).⁷⁸⁰ God's signs confirmed his purpose through Moses, not powerful Pharaoh (7:36), just as signs confirmed Jesus's movement (6:8). Even the tabernacle and temple themselves originally derived from God's voice, not entrenched positions of hereditary power.

⁷⁷⁸ Although forensic, its saturation with the LXX adjusts its rhetorical form to that of some Israelite speeches, esp. historical retrospectives such as Joshua 24 (G. A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980], 129).

⁷⁷⁹ Interpretations that use or treat it as anti-Jewish neglect the ethnicity of Stephen and his colleagues, and cannot apply the same standard consistently to the Qumran scrolls (cf. 1QH^a 10.24) or even OT prophets (cf. Jer 7:8–15; Amos 9:7–8a). Genuine anti-Judaism is better sampled in Apion, Tacitus, or the Epistle of Barnabas. For intraJewish polemic, see, e.g., L. T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and Conventions of Ancient Rhetoric," *JBL* 108 (3, 1989): 419–41.

⁷⁸⁰ The wisdom of Stephen's circle (6:3, 10) evokes that of Joseph (7:10) and Moses (7:22; cf. Luke 2:40, 52); Stephen's power (6:8) evokes Moses's (7:22).

Stephen's retrospective highlights the continuity of his detractor's rebellion with salvation-historical precedent: Jesus (7:52; cf. Stephen, 7:51) climaxes a history of rejected deliverers (7:9, 25–29, 35–39, 52), one of them explicitly prophesied (7:37). Far from their rejection disqualifying Jesus as Messiah, it fulfills the historical and predicted pattern!

Stephen explains what he has been saying about the temple (7:43–50); God is not localized (7:2, 5–6, 10, 14–15, 22, 29–30, 33–34, 36, 48–50; cf. Cf. Jer 7:4–14; Amos 9:7).⁷⁸¹ Although Luke would not regard this as opposing the temple, Stephen's temple-centric accusers might. Many Jews considered Jerusalem the world's center (see comment on 1:8), Israel holier than other lands,⁷⁸² Jerusalem as the holiest city,⁷⁸³ and the temple was the holiest place on earth.⁷⁸⁴ Some later teachers even insisted that God spoke only in the holy land – aside from biblical cases dismissed as exceptions (*Mekilta Pisha* 1.35–105). Nevertheless, if, as seems likely, Luke addresses a Diaspora audience after 70, few will dispute the point. Jesus's, Stephen's, and Paul's perspectives now appear vindicated, and the movement's global imperative to the ends of the earth (1:8) must continue.

Stephen's speech follows some postbiblical traditions (e.g., 7:16, 22), but omits most of them.⁷⁸⁵ Like his contemporaries, Stephen does condense texts by blending events at points.⁷⁸⁶

J. Bradley Chance compares some of Stephen's key divergences from earlier Scripture itself (often reflecting use of the LXX or postbiblical early Jewish readings):⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸¹ Against some, challenges to the temple arose less from "hellenistic Jews" than from some Judeans; where Stephen went beyond Essenes and others (except Jesus and Josephus's Joshua ben Hananiah) was that he publicly challenged the temple's guardians. Stephen neither allegorizes like Philo nor prophesies in Greek meter like the *Sibylline Oracles*. The temple's greatest opposition came from Samaritans (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.74–79; 18.30, 85–87), as Luke knew (Luke 9:51–53), but Samaritans would not cite Isa 66:1.

⁷⁸² Cf., e.g., Zech 2:12; 2 Bar. 61:7; *m. Kelim* 1:6; *t. Abod. Zar.* 2:8; *Sipre Deut.* 32.5.10; 37.1.4–6; 37.2.1–37.3.7.

⁷⁸³ E.g., Neh 11:1; Sir 36:13; 2 Macc 3:1; *Ps. Sol.* 11:2–7; 11QT 47.14–15; Philo, *Flacc.* 46; 4 *Ezra* 7:26; *m. Kelim* 1:8; *Seqal.* 8:1.

⁷⁸⁴ E.g., *m. Kelim* 1:6–9; *Mek. Pisha* 1.42–50; *Sipre Deut.* 317.2.1; see further Keener, *Acts*, 2:1345–51.

⁷⁸⁵ Like *Ps.*-Philo and even *Jubilees*, Stephen, at least in this concise précis, remains closer to the biblical accounts than do Philo or Josephus.

⁷⁸⁶ See, e.g., Downing, "Redaction Criticism," 56; McGing, "Adaptation," 128; Licona, *Differences*, 52, 108.

⁷⁸⁷ Chance, *Acts*, 110 (though I have adapted the wording). Both Luke and Stephen the Hellenist would depend on the LXX.

Speech in Acts 7	Pentateuch passage	Possible explanations
7:2–3: God called Abram in Gen 12:1 “before he lived in Haran”	God called Abram <i>when</i> he was in Haran (11:31–32; 12:4–5)	Gen 12:1 says, “from your own country”; in Gen 15:7 and Neh 9:7, God brought Abram from Ur
7:4: Abram left Haran for Canaan after Terah’s death	Abram was born when Terah was 70 (Gen 11:26) and left seventy-five years later (12:4), long before Terah’s death at 205 (11:32)	Abram’s departure (Gen 12:5) is mentioned after Terah’s death (11:32); the hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo read the passage the way Stephen did (<i>Migr.</i> 177), and the Samaritan Pentateuch allows it
7:14: Seventy-five went to Egypt	Seventy went to Egypt (Gen 46:27; Ex 1:5; Deut 10:22)	The LXX and Qumran texts report seventy-five (at Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5); instead of adding Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph’s <i>two</i> sons to Gen 46:26 to get a round seventy, the LXX claims that he has <i>nine</i> sons. Philo also notes the discrepancy (<i>Migr.</i> 200–2)
7:16: Jacob and “our ancestors” were buried in Shechem ⁷⁸⁸	Though Joseph was buried in Shechem (Josh 24:32), Jacob was buried at Hebron (Gen 49:29–32)	Shechem’s ruins were now in Samaritan territory ⁷⁸⁹

In 7:2a, Luke provides a brief summary of Stephen’s *exordium*, a respectful address to one’s hearers. Stephen addresses the Council respectfully as “fathers,” a common honorary address (e.g., 2 Kgs 5:13; 13:14; Diodorus Siculus 21.12.5). One might speak thus of various benefactors,⁷⁹⁰ e.g.,

⁷⁸⁸ Grammatically it is possible that only “our ancestors” (Jacob’s sons) were buried there, and since Joseph was later reburied in Shechem, it is plausible to suppose, against subsequent Jewish tradition (*Jub.* 46:9–10; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.199), his brothers were reburied there with him. Jewish tradition did not want them buried in Shechem, which was now Samaritan territory.

⁷⁸⁹ Writers often condensed material, leading to imprecision on a technical level (see, e.g., Licona, *Differences*, 52, 108). Luke’s theology suggests why he chooses Shechem over Hebron for the condensed version.

⁷⁹⁰ E.g., Plutarch, *Cic.* 23.3; 2 Macc 14:37.

(cont.)

Speech in Acts 7	Pentateuch passage	Possible explanations
7:22: Moses' training in Egyptian wisdom	Not noted (although some Egyptian education could be assumed for a son of one of Pharaoh's daughters)	Often emphasized in postbiblical Jewish sources (Philo, <i>Mos.</i> 1.20–24)
7:23: Moses visited his people at age forty	Exodus specifies only that he was grown (Exod 2:11)	Later tradition divided Moses' 120-year life into three 40-year periods
7:53: Angels mediated the law	Missing in the Hebrew Bible	A common Jewish tradition (cf. LXX Deut 33:2; Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 15.136; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2)

teachers,⁷⁹¹ generals,⁷⁹² the emperor,⁷⁹³ or Roman senators, the “elders” of their people.⁷⁹⁴ Still, the rest of this speech may nuance the honor (cf. 7:39, 44–45).

God's promise to Abraham begins a history of promises (Luke 1:55, 73), with partial fulfillments, climaxing in Jesus (7:52).⁷⁹⁵ The paragraph's goal is “*worship in this place*” (Acts 7:7) – something Jesus's movement had been doing (2:46) – yet Scripture spoke also of other holy places suitable for worship (7:33; cf. 24:14; 27:23), and those who possessed a holy site could still offer false worship (7:42). That is, against the assumption behind the charge in 6:13, the temple is not uniquely holy; Stephen's response will climax in 7:44–50.

Stephen's speech repeatedly echoes biblical wording, and sometimes entire sections. Here, for example,

⁷⁹¹ E.g., Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.490; 1.25.536, 537; 2 Kgs 2:12; 4 Bar. 2:4, 6, 8, 5:5; *t. Sanh.* 7:9; Matt 23:9.

⁷⁹² Silius Italicus 7.734–35; 8.2; 17.651; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.80.

⁷⁹³ E.g., *Res Gestae* 6.35; Ovid, *Tristia* 4.4.13; *Fasti* 2.130–32, 637; Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.25; Suetonius, *Aug.* 58.2.

⁷⁹⁴ E.g., Sallust, *Catil.* 51.1, 4, 7, 12, 15, 37, 41; Cicero, *Cat.* 1.4.9; 1.4.9; Livy 1.8.7; 1.26.5; 2.1.10–11; Plutarch, *R.Q.* 58, *Mor.* 278D.

⁷⁹⁵ Cf. N. A. Dahl, “The Story of Abraham in Luke-Acts,” pages 139–58 in Keck and Martyn, *Studies*, 144. For the Abrahamic covenant in Luke-Acts, see further R. L. Brawley, “For Blessing All Families of the Earth: Covenant Traditions in Luke-Acts,” *CurTM* 22 (1, 1995): 18–26; idem, “Abrahamic Covenant Traditions and the Characterization of God in Luke-Acts,” pages 109–32 in Verheyden, *Unity*.

- *God of glory* (7:2) uses Ps 29:3 (LXX 28:3)
- *Leave your country . . . show you* (7:3) is very close to Gen 12:1⁷⁹⁶
- *Give . . . as a heritage* (7:5) is frequent language in Numbers and Deuteronomy
- *Not even a foot's length* (7:5) uses Deut 2:5
- *You and your offspring after you* (7:5) reflects Gen 17:8
- *His descendants . . . four hundred years* (7:6) reflects Gen 15:13
- *Resident aliens . . . belonging to others* (7:6) also recalls Moses's experience (Exod 2:22; 18:3)
- *But I will judge . . . come out* (7:7) reflects Gen 15:14
- *Out . . . worship* (7:7) probably evokes Exod 3:12, referring to worship on Sinai (for which Stephen substitutes *this place* in light of his reference to Sinai in Acts 7:33)
- *Covenant* and *circumcision* refer to Gen 17:10–14⁷⁹⁷
- Circumcision on the eighth day (Gen 17:12; cf. Luke 1:59; 2:21)

Jewish people looked to Abraham as their father (e.g., 4 Macc 16:20; *m. Abot* 3:16; 5:3–4, 9, 22), as Luke recognizes (Luke 1:73; 3:8; 16:24, 30), and hailed his example.⁷⁹⁸ Although God blessed his descendants,⁷⁹⁹ and Luke affirms God's covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:73; cf. 13:16; 19:9; echoes in 1:7, 13), Israel could not depend on this alone (Luke 3:8//Matt 3:9).⁸⁰⁰

Genesis does not record a vision of glory (7:2) at Abram's call, but Stephen may assume it from Abraham's later experience (Gen 15:12–21).⁸⁰¹ This vision report and that of Acts 7:55 frame Stephen's speech. Abram abandoned everything for God (7:3), a pattern Luke appreciates (Luke 14:26–33; 18:29–30) and which Stephen's peers soon experience (Acts 8:1); Abraham's becoming an immigrant *resident alien* (cf. later Joseph and Moses) may also foreshadow believers' scattering (cf. Heb 11:8–10, 13–16; 1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11). Many would not define *the country of the Chaldeans* (7:4; cf. Gen 11:28, 31; 15:7; Neh 9:7) as technically in

⁷⁹⁶ Acts 7:4 may explain why Luke omits in 7:3 "your father's house" (Gen 12:1).

⁷⁹⁷ The idea was, however, common; 1 Macc 1:15; *Jub.* 15:11, 13, 14, 26; 16:14; 20:2.

⁷⁹⁸ They celebrated his righteousness (1 Macc 2:52) and opposition to idolatry (*Jub.* 11:12–17; 12:1–8; 21:3), and used him as a model (4 Macc 15:28; *m. Abot* 5:19/22), even a model proselyte (*Mek. Nezikin* 18.36ff.); he supposedly kept the entire law in advance (*Jub.* passim; 2 *Bar.* 57:2; *m. Qidd.* 4:14).

⁷⁹⁹ Deut 4:37; 7:8; 9:5, 27; 10:15; 2 Macc 1:2. Some may have invoked his merits (*m. Abot* 2:2; *Ros Has.* 4:5; *Mek. Pisha* 16.165–68; *Sipra Behuqotai* pq. 8.269.2.5).

⁸⁰⁰ Deut 7:7; 10:22; 26:5; Rom 4:13; *Sipre Deut.* 329.3.1.

⁸⁰¹ Cf. further John 8:56; *LAB* 23:6; 4 *Ezra* 3:14; 2 *Bar.* 4:4.

Mesopotamia; some did (Josephus, *Ant.* 1.157). The four hundred years of 7:6 is a rounded number (cf. cf. 13:19; Exod 12:40).

After almost anticlimactically (though chronologically accurately) noting the gift of circumcision, verse 8 provides a chronological transition from Abraham to Joseph. Whereas Isaac’s role is largely transitional in Genesis (apart from a small cycle of stories), Jacob’s is not; here, however, he appears only in connection with the Joseph story (7:12, 14–15).

The speech later reverses positive experiences surrounding Abraham here for disobedient Israel:⁸⁰²

Abraham story	Condemnation of Israel
God “resettled” Abraham (7:4)	God “resettled” Israel by exile (7:43)
Abraham’s descendants should worship God (7:7)	Israel worships idolatrously (7:42)
God grants the covenant of circumcision (7:8)	Stephen’s covenant-breaking accusers have uncircumcised hearts (7:51)

7:9–16: JOSEPH THE REJECTED, ALIENATED DELIVERER

As in the Abraham story (Acts 7:4–5), the theme of God’s servant suffering before exaltation recurs (7:9; cf. Gen 37:18–41:14; Ps 105:17–19). By various literary connections Luke links Joseph with Jesus⁸⁰³ and Stephen himself, whereas Joseph’s brothers are spiritual ancestors of those who killed the prophets, Jesus, and ultimately Stephen himself (7:51–60). Only the boldest of prophets or philosophers accused their hearers’ ancestors of evil-doing and added that the hearers now compounded their offenses (Luke 11:47–51; Diogenes, *Ep.* 28).⁸⁰⁴

A Closer Look: Precedents and Narrative Typology

Long before Luke, Greek historians, citing providence, retrospectively discerned correspondences and patterns in history. OT writers already linked

⁸⁰² Tannehill, *Acts*, 90.
⁸⁰³ Cf. further allusions to the Joseph narrative in Luke-Acts in N. P. Lunn, “Allusions to the Joseph Narrative in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts: Foundations of a Biblical Type,” *JETS* 55 (1, 2012): 27–41 (31–35).
⁸⁰⁴ Rhetoricians advised making hearers well-disposed by praising their ancestors (Socratics, *Ep.* 28).

some figures typologically long before Luke; one thinks of Joshua's picture of a second exodus (Josh 3:7–13; 4:22–24) or the prophets' picture of a future exodus (e.g., Isa 12:2; 40:3; 43:20; Jer 16:14–15; Hos 2:14–15; 11:1, 11; Mic 7:14).⁸⁰⁵ Indeed, the Genesis-Exodus narratives themselves provide conspicuous parallels and contrasts between Joseph and Moses, for example:

Joseph	Moses
Brothers sell Joseph into slavery	Family, who are slaves, rescue him from slavery
Midianites sell Joseph into Egypt	Midianites receive Moses when he flees Egypt
Joseph becomes "father" to Pharaoh (Gen 45:8)	Moses becomes son to Pharaoh's daughter
In one day, Joseph is exalted from slavery, over Egypt	In one day, Moses loses his royalty in Egypt by identifying with slaves
Joseph makes all Egypt Pharaoh's slaves (47:19)	Moses frees slaves; through him God judges Pharaoh's might
Joseph from Jacob's house to Egypt as a deliverer	Moses from Pharaoh's house from Egypt as a deliverer
Joseph's God delivers Egypt in famine	Moses' God strikes Egypt with plagues
Joseph, exiled in Egypt, marries an Egyptian	Moses, exiled from Egypt, marries a Midianite (and/or a Nubian) ⁸⁰⁶
Asenath's father is priest of On	Zipporah's father is priest of Midian
Asenath bears two initial sons, the name of the first reflecting his father's sojourn in a foreign land	Zipporah bears two initial sons, the name of the first reflecting his father's sojourn in a foreign land
God raises him up to bring Israel to Egypt	God raises him up to bring Israel out of Egypt
Future deliverer's leadership initially rejected by his brothers	Future deliverer's leadership initially rejected by his people

Luke, who compares and contrasts major figures in his story (following Greco-Roman conventions), can barely have missed such rich allusions in Israel's ancient Scriptures. On a more metanarrative, theological level, Luke undoubtedly envisions divine connections in salvation history. ****

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. also the Urzeit as a prototype for the Endzeit in Jewish eschatological literature (Isa 51:3; 63:11–14; 65:17; especially Eden).

⁸⁰⁶ The account shows other narrative connections as well: e.g., Isaac (via an intermediary; Gen 24:10–24), Jacob (Gen 29:1–12), and Moses (Exod 2:16–21) all found wives at wells.

Again the speech echoes biblical language, for example:

- Joseph's brothers are *jealous of him* (7:9; Gen 37:11)⁸⁰⁷
- They *sold him into Egypt* (7:9; Gen 37:27–28, 36; 45:4–5)⁸⁰⁸
- *God was with Joseph* (7:9; Gen 39:21; cf. 21:20; 21:22; 26:24; 28:20; 31:5; 35:3; 48:21; Acts 10:38; 18:10)
- Joseph exalted over Egypt and Pharaoh's household (7:10; Gen 45:8)
- The Greek terms translated *great suffering* (7:11) appear in Neh 9:37; Jer 11:16; 1 Macc 9:27
- Jacob *heard that there was grain in Egypt* (7:12; Gen 42:2)
- *Joseph made himself known to his brothers* (7:13; Gen 45:1)
- Joseph invited his father (7:14; Gen 45:23–25)

Unlike many contemporary accounts,⁸⁰⁹ Luke refrains from whitewashing the patriarchs' sin (7:9). Meanwhile, both *afflictions* (7:10; 7:11; 11:19; 14:22; 20:23) and often God's rescue (7:10, 34; 12:11; 26:17) reflect common patterns of divine activity. Joseph's *favor* (*charis*, grace; 7:10) and *wisdom* connect him with Stephen (6:3, 8) and Jesus (Luke 2:40, 52); being driven out by one's own and receiving favor before *gentiles* also fits where Luke's narrative is headed. The Greek term translated *appointed* in Acts 7:10 also connects with Stephen (6:3) and Moses (7:27, 35). In light of *first time* in 7:12, *second time* (7:13) seems emphatic, perhaps hinting at a better reception for Jesus at his return (1:6, 11); Moses was rejected the first time (7:27–29).

Plans for burial (7:16) reflect faith in God's promise (cf. Gen 50:24; Heb 11:22). But *Jacob*, not Abraham, purchased the site in Shechem, where Joseph was buried (Gen 33:19; Josh 24:32); naming Abraham here conflates this account with Abraham's purchase of a burial site for Sarah (Gen 23:9, 13, 15–16) – the site where Joseph buried Jacob (Gen 50:13–14).⁸¹⁰

Telescoping or blending (a common ancient literary practice) may allow Luke to condense, but both texts illustrate that the patriarchs lacked more than a foothold in the promised land. Telescoping also allows a clear Samaritan connection, since Shechem lay in Samaritan territory,

⁸⁰⁷ Often recalled, e.g., Philo, *Joseph* 5; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.13; *T. Dan* 1:6; but omitted in *Jub.* 39:1–2.

⁸⁰⁸ Kidnaping for slave trading was a capital offense (Exod 21:16; Deut 24:7; Hammurabi 15).

⁸⁰⁹ For whitewashing, cf., e.g., *Jub.* 19:15–16; 27:6–7; 28:6–7; CD 4.20–5.3; 1QapGen^{ar} 20.10–11; *Jos. Asen.* 23; *T. Jud.* 8–12; *T. Iss.* 3.1.

⁸¹⁰ Many plausibly suppose merely a simple mistake here. Nevertheless, one would expect such a mistake in this case to have been corrected by biblically literate hearers, since authors usually performed large narrative works orally, allowing for feedback and subsequent revision. This observation might suggest that the conflation was deliberate.

prefiguring where the narrative heads next (Acts 8:5–25). More importantly, God brings deliverance through not Canaan but Egypt.

7:17–28: MOSES THE REJECTED DELIVERER

Stephen views Jesus as the “prophet like Moses” predicted in 7:37 (and 3:22), one who is rejected like Moses and the entire prophetic tradition (7:52). Luke agrees:⁸¹¹

Moses in Acts 7	Jesus in Luke-Acts
“powerful in words and works” (7:22)	“powerful in words and works” (Luke 24:19)
Instructed in wisdom (7:22)	Instructed in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52)
They did not understand his mission (7:25); they denied him (7:35); words rejected (7:39–43)	Jesus was denied (cf. Acts 3:14, 17, 26)
Sees theophany; leader and liberator (7:35)	Cf. the likely theophany in Luke 3:21; Jesus as leader (Acts 3:15)
Ascends on Mount Sinai (7:38) ⁸¹²	Jesus ascends (Acts 2:33)

Because Stephen was accused of speaking against “Moses” and his law, the speech gives special and extended attention to Moses – as a witness for Stephen’s defense (cf. John 5:39, 45–47).

Again Stephen quotes and echoes the OT, for example:

- *Increased and multiplied* (7:17; Exod 1:7)⁸¹³
- *Another king who had not known Joseph ruled* (7:18; Exod 1:8)
- In Greek, *dealt craftily* (7:19; Exod 1:10; cf. Jdt 5:11)⁸¹⁴
- In Greek, *beautiful*; three months (7:20; Exod 2:2)⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ Zehnle, *Pentecost Discourse*, 77 (slightly adapted).

⁸¹² Jewish tradition developed this into an ascent even into heaven (*LAB* 12:1; see comment on Acts 2:33).

⁸¹³ Luke apparently employs this model as paradigmatic for the gospel’s spread; see 6:7; 12:24.

⁸¹⁴ Also *race* (Acts 7:19; Exod 1:9); *forced* (Acts 7:19; Exod 1:11, though there applied to building projects); *so that they would die* (Acts 7:19; Exod 1:22).

⁸¹⁵ Cf. Heb 11:23. Jewish tradition extensively elaborated the hiding (*Jub.* 47:3–4; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.216–19; *LAB* 9:12) and Moses’s natal beauty (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 2.230–32), even suspecting that he was born circumcised (*LAB* 9:13; *b. Sotah* 12a). Acts 7:20 adds *father’s house*, the phrase omitted from Gen 12:1 in Acts 7:3.

- In Greek, *striking down* (7:24; Exod 2:12); the verb *wrong* (7:26; Exod 2:13)
- *Who made you . . . the Egyptian yesterday* (7:27–28; Exod 2:14)

For Luke, God's future promise to Abraham (7:5, 17) unfolds in multiple related features: the promise of the Davidic Messiah (13:23, 32), the Spirit (1:4; 2:33, 39; Luke 24:49; cf. Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13), and ultimately the land and Israel's future (Luke 1:55; Acts 7:5, 17; 26:6–7; Rom 4:13; Eph 2:12; see comment on the Spirit as a foretaste of the future in 1:4–5). The first installment occurs when Israel settles in the promised land (7:17; Gen 15:13–16).

Abandoning infants (7:19) was now a familiar gentile practice: Greeks often exposed unwanted babies to be eaten by vultures or dogs, or taken by others to be raised, most often as slaves.⁸¹⁶ Jews opposed the practice,⁸¹⁷ and it could also recall for them another wicked king, Antiochus IV, killing their babies (1 Macc 1:61; 2 Macc 6:10; 4 Macc 4:25).

Although Luke's account is concise, birth, nurture, and education (7:20–22; cf. 22:3) were conventional biographic topics for Greek orators. Orators often praised a person's rearing, education, and youth.⁸¹⁸ Adoption in Luke's milieu made the adoptee an heir.⁸¹⁹ Ancients expected omens surrounding important births,⁸²⁰ and Jewish traditions elaborated on Pharaoh's daughter,⁸²¹ Moses's gentile education,⁸²² and his young exploits.⁸²³ Moses being "powerful in words and deeds" echoes Jesus

⁸¹⁶ Cf., e.g., Quintilian, *Decl.* 306.22; Lucian, *Downward Journey* 5; Soranus, *Gynec.* 2.5.9; 2.6.10; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.602–9; Ptolemy, *Tetrab.* 3.9.126; N. Lewis, *Life*, 54–58.

⁸¹⁷ Ps.-Phoc. 184–85; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.115–16; *Virt.* 131; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.202; *Sib. Or.* 3.765–66; Diodorus Siculus 40.3.8; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5. Also Egyptians (Diodorus Siculus 1.80.3) and Germans (Tacitus, *Germ.* 19). Further discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 2:1376–81.

⁸¹⁸ See Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 7 (Encomion), 16; Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 371.17–372.9. Cf. Luke 1–2.

⁸¹⁹ E.g., Isaeus, *Menec.* 1, 14; *Apollodorus* 1; *P.Oxy.* 1206.9–11, 22; J. C. Walters, "Paul, Adoption, and Inheritance," pages 42–76 in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (ed. J. P. Sampley; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 44–55.

⁸²⁰ Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 371.5–17.

⁸²¹ E.g., *Jub.* 47:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.224–36.

⁸²² Josephus, *Ant.* 2.236; esp. Philo, *Moses* 1.5, 20–24; cf. E. Koskenniemi, "Moses – A Well-Educated Man: A Look at the Educational Idea in Early Judaism," *JSP* 17 (4, 2008): 281–96. Some imagined ancient Egypt's learning as exotic (Valerius Maximus 8.7. ext. 2–3; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.168), though Josephus supposed it borrowed from Jews (cf. also Artapanus frg. 3). Gentile education is a safe inference for a member of Pharaoh's household and of interest to Luke (Acts 7:22; cf. 17:28).

⁸²³ Artapanus frg. 3; Philo, *Mos.* 1.21–31; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.233–57.

in Luke 24:19 (cf. Acts 18:24); later in Exodus he complains that he is “slow in speech” (Exod 4:10), but Jewish tradition largely sidesteps this portrait.⁸²⁴ Moses’s age as *forty* (Acts 7:23) is an inference (cf. Exod 7:7; Deut 34:7); it may reflect tradition,⁸²⁵ but is also conventional language for a generation (e.g., Acts 13:21; Judg 3:11; 5:31; 8:28; 13:1).

Visit (Acts 7:23) goes beyond Exod 2:11; Luke often uses it for God’s salvation-historical activity (Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; Acts 15:14; cf. Exod 3:16; 4:31 LXX). That Moses’s people failed to understand his role in their salvation (*rescuing* is *sôtêria*, which also means “salvation”; Acts 7:25) prefigures their misapprehension of Jesus foretold in Scripture (13:27; Isa 6:9–10 in Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26–27).⁸²⁶ The language *avenged* (7:24) shows that Luke understood Moses’s action as just.⁸²⁷ The wrongdoer demands who made Moses *a ruler and a judge* (7:25).⁸²⁸ This statement of rejection frames Moses’s emigration, call, and the announcement of the prophet like Moses (7:35).

7:29–34: MOSES THE ALIEN

God commissions (7:30–34) the very one whom his people rejected (7:25, 35). Again Stephen not only retells but often sometimes closely echoes OT passages:

- *An angel appeared . . . in the flame of a burning bush* (7:30; Exod 3:2)
- *Moses was amazed* (7:31; LXX Exod 3:3)
- *I am the God . . . Jacob* (7:32; Exod 3:6)
- *Take off . . . holy ground* (7:33; Exod 3:5; cf. Josh 5:15)⁸²⁹
- *I have surely seen . . . to Egypt* (7:34; Exod 3:7, 9–10)⁸³⁰

⁸²⁴ Sir 45:3; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.14–23. The pairing of *words and deeds* (Acts 7:23) was conventional.

⁸²⁵ E.g., *Sipre Deut.* 357.14.1; forty-two in *Jub.* 47:10–12.

⁸²⁶ Although LXX Exodus reserves *sôtêria* language for God’s activity (Exod 14:13; 15:2), it was natural to apply to Moses (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.157; *Ant.* 3.69; cf. *Ant.* 2.254; Sir 46:1). The addition of *ôphthê* (blandly rendered “came” in the NRSV) to Exod 2:13 in Acts 7:26 may also evoke Christ (Luke 24:34; Acts 9:17; 13:31; 26:16; cf. 7:30), as might Moses’s peacemaking (Luke 1:79; 2:14; 19:38; Acts 10:36).

⁸²⁷ As in Artapanus (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.18); Philo, *Mos.* 1.44; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Ex 2:12; Josephus omits the incident (*Ant.* 2.254–57).

⁸²⁸ Jesus might allude to this passage in Luke 12:14, though the wording (*judge or arbitrator*) differs. The wrongdoer *pushed aside* Moses (Acts 7:27, 39), language Luke applies also to Christ’s message (the same Greek term in 13:46).

⁸²⁹ For removing footwear to respect a holy place, cf. Iamblichus, *V.P.* 18.85; 23.105; *m. Ber.* 9:15; *Sipre Deut.* 258.2.2.

⁸³⁰ Acts 7:34 condenses much of the content of Exod 3:7–8 into three parallel statements of God’s activity: he has seen, heard, and come down to deliver them. The *groaning* draws from Exod 2:24; 6:5.

Rejection by one of his own people drove Moses from Egypt (7:26–29), just as persecution would soon scatter Jesus’s followers (8:1; cf. 14:6). Becoming a *resident alien* (7:29) fits the theme of such alienation in 7:6: against his Jerusalem-centric accusers, one cannot depend on a particular land as a permanent home. In Midian Moses *became the father of two sons*, highlighting his interethnic family (Exod 2:21–22; cf. Num 12:1), again challenging prejudices against gentiles (cf. Acts 16:1–3).

Moses apparently abandoned his desire to liberate his ungrateful people, only to be sent back there by God for that very purpose. When God reveals himself to Moses, God identifies with his servants such as Abraham (7:32; cf. 7:2–8),⁸³¹ as Jesus will soon do with his (Acts 9:4). Moses’s fear to see God (7:32; Exod 3:6) may reflect knowledge of the danger of such revelation, which could kill (Exod 33:20; Judg 6:22–23; 13:22–23) or, soon, blind (Acts 9:8).

Stephen highlights this point: God revealed himself on *holy ground* (7:33; Exod 3:5) outside both the “holy land” and the midst of his people, to send his servant into foreign territory with his message. The addition to 7:30 of *in the wilderness of Mount Sinai* from other contexts (e.g., Exod 19:1–2; Num 1:1, 19) may underline the point.⁸³²

7:35–43: MOSES, PROTOTYPE OF THE REJECTED DELIVERER

God sent the rejected one as deliverer (7:35), with signs and wonders (7:36); Scripture used Moses as the pattern for one understood to be the ultimate deliverer (7:37). Far from undermining the law as his accusers insisted, Stephen merely preached the promised successor to the true lawgiver! Moses had God’s living message (7:38), but he was rejected by his people (7:39), whose hearts never abandoned ancient Egypt’s paganism (7:40–42). By implication, the prophet like Moses would be a rejected deliverer, who might also return and deliver in an unexpected way.

⁸³¹ The title appears also in 3:13; Luke 20:37; also in the first of the Amidah, a regularly recited Jewish prayer. “God of our fathers” appears in Acts 3:13; 5:30; 22:14; 24:14.

⁸³² The emphasis on *wilderness* (7:30, 36, 38, 42, 44) might counter holy land theology that limited Diaspora revelation to places near water (*Mek. Pisha* 1.63–64), dismissing this instance as an exception (*Mek. Bahodesh* 5.92ff.). It might also remind Luke’s audience of the initial events of the promised new exodus (Luke 3:2, 4; 4:1).

Scripture saturates Stephen's language:

- *God will raise up . . . raised me up* (7:37; Deut 18:15, 18)
- *Make gods . . . happened to him* (7:40; Exod 32:1, 23)
- *Did you offer . . . so I will remove you* (7:42–43; LXX Amos 5:25–27)⁸³³

"This Moses" (7:35), derived from the quotation in 7:40 (Exod 32:1, 23), probably recalls the reader to the recent and specifically Lukan expression, "this Jesus" (Acts 1:11; 2:32, 36; also 9:22; 17:3).⁸³⁴ Like a powerful orator, Stephen hammers home his point that the very one Israel rejected was the deliverer God appointed for them (my translation): "*This [touton] Moses whom they disowned. . . this [touton] is the one God sent to be your ruler and deliverer*" (7:35); "this one [*houtos*] led them forth" (7:36); "this one [*houtos*] is the prophesied prototype of the prophetic deliverer" (7:37); "this one [*houtos*] who mediated God's own message" (7:38).⁸³⁵

His people *rejected* Moses (7:35, prefiguring Jesus: 3:13–14) as *ruler and judge*, yet God made him *ruler and liberator* (7:35; the latter term is cognate to terms for eschatological redemption in Christ, Luke 1:68; 2:38; 24:21). The conjunction of "signs and wonders" evokes the exodus narrative, as throughout the biblical literature and often Jewish tradition.⁸³⁶ It also applies, however, to signs performed by Jesus (Acts 2:22) as well as Stephen (6:8), and Jesus's other followers (2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12).

Moses led them from the land of their sojourn for a land of promise (7:36; like Abraham in 7:3–4); obedience would soon require a less pleasant relocation for Stephen's peers (8:1).⁸³⁷ Yet as in 7:39, Moses faced his people's repeated complaints and obduracy in the wilderness.⁸³⁸

⁸³³ *Book of the prophets* (Acts 7:42) refers to the single scroll of the minor prophets. Acts 15:16–18 quotes Amos 9. Probably reflecting the same milieu as Luke's tradition, CD 7.14–17 cites both Amos 5:27 and 9:11 together (linked by what the interpreters took as a shared word).

⁸³⁴ With Johnson, *Acts*, 27. The expression appears with Jesus only in Acts in the NT.

⁸³⁵ Repeatedly starting with the same term is the rhetorical device *anaphora* (see R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 19; Rowe, "Style," 131; Cicero, *Orator* 39.135; Fronto, *Ad Antoninum Imp.* 2.6.1–2). Shifting from the accusative to the nominative case does not affect the rhetoric (cf. polyptoton in Rowe, "Style," 132–33).

⁸³⁶ E.g., Exod 7:3; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Neh 9:10; *Jub.* 48:4; Bar 2:11; Wis 10:16.

⁸³⁷ *The Red Sea* reflects the LXX and most subsequent sources (Heb 11:29; Philo, *Mos.* 1.165; 2.1; 1 *Clem.* 51.5), though they apparently understood this as the Persian Gulf (1QapGen 21.17–18; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.39; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 379). Greeks also applied the language to the Persian Gulf and even the Indian Ocean.

⁸³⁸ E.g., Exod 16:3; 17:3; Num 13:31–33; Heb 3:7–11; CD 3.6–12; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.13, 295–97, 307; 4.1, 14–63.

Others also understood the prophet like Moses (7:37; cf. 3:22) in eschatological and often messianic terms (4Q175 1.5–13). The final deliverer like Moses would perform signs as Moses did (Acts 7:36; Ps 105:27), would receive a gift for his people like Moses did (Acts 7:38; cf. 2:33), and, most importantly, would be rejected like him (7:39). Stephen does not reject Moses (6:11); rather, his adversaries reject Moses's successor Jesus.⁸³⁹

Not only Jews⁸⁴⁰ but Greeks and Romans⁸⁴¹ ridiculed Egyptians for animal idols; by seeking such idols *they turned back to Egypt* (Acts 7:39).⁸⁴² Some Jews considered their sacrifice to the *calf* (7:41) the worst sin of Israel's history (*Sipre Deut.* 1.9.1–2); so embarrassing was the episode that Josephus's apologetic history skips it (*Ant.* 3.95–99). It worked much better for confession (Neh 9:18; Ps 106:19) or to exhort fellow Jews (e.g., LAB 12:1–10). *The work of their hands* (7:41) prepares for 7:48 and underlines their folly: idolaters worshiped what they had made, not the one who had made them (Ps 115:4–8; Isa 40:18–23; 46:6–7; Jer 1:16).

Thus God *handed them over* to their idolatry (Acts 7:42); many understood that God could punish the wicked by delivering them to their sin.⁸⁴³ The *host of heaven* (7:42) and *star* (7:43) suggest astrological deities; astrology was popular in the Greco-Roman world. Whereas Jewish tradition often considered the stars angels⁸⁴⁴ and disdained their worship,⁸⁴⁵ gentiles often treated them as divine.⁸⁴⁶ The deities' names in 7:43 come from the LXX rather than the Hebrew of Amos,⁸⁴⁷ and this allows Stephen to condemn their worship of a *tent* (7:43) – and thus their abuse of the divinely designed tabernacle (7:44)!⁸⁴⁸

⁸³⁹ *Congregation* (*ekklēsia*, 7:38) is an appropriate title for Israel in the LXX, but Luke's audience will naturally consider its use for the "church" (the usual English translation of *ekklēsia* in the NT, e.g., 5:11; 8:1–3; 9:31).

⁸⁴⁰ *Let. Aris.* 138; *Wis* 13:13–14; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.81, 85, 128–29, 139. Note *Deut* 4:17–18.

⁸⁴¹ E.g., Apollodorus, *Bib.* 1.6.3; Plutarch, *Isis* 71, *Mor.* 379DE; Lucian, *Parl. G.* 10–11; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 6.18–19.

⁸⁴² Many Israelites had probably worshiped such idols (cf. the Egyptian Apis) in Egypt, as *Lev. Rab.* 22:8 infers.

⁸⁴³ E.g., 1 Sam 2:25; Ps 81:12; CD 2.13; *Jub.* 21:22; Josephus, *War* 5.343; Rom 1:24, 26, 28; 2 Thess 2:11.

⁸⁴⁴ 1QM 10.11–12; see esp. Luke 2:13; God's court in 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chron 18:18. *Hosts* connotes military ranks, applied to angels in 1 En. 69:3; 72:1; 75:1; 82:10–12; cf. 2 Kgs 6:17; 1QM 7.6.

⁸⁴⁵ E.g., *Deut* 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16; Jer 8:2; 1 En. 80:7.

⁸⁴⁶ E.g., Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.15.39–40; *Resp.* 6.15.15; Seneca, *Ben.* 4.23.4.

⁸⁴⁷ Like the LXX, CD 7.14–15 construes the Hebrew term as "tent."

⁸⁴⁸ Its *pattern* (Gr. *typos*, 7:44) contrasts also with the *images* (*typoi*) in 7:43. Ancients understood this pattern as following a heavenly prototype (*Wis* 9:8; Heb 8:5; 2 Bar. 4:5–6; often in Philo).

Judgment was inevitable; Stephen's *beyond Babylon* (Acts 7:43) reapplies Amos's language (*beyond Damascus*, referring to Israel's Assyrian exile; Amos 5:27) to Judah's Babylonian exile. It foreshadows another coming exile, however (Luke 21:22–24); Jews widely viewed Rome as a new Babylon.⁸⁴⁹

7:44–50: GOD NEEDS NO TEMPLE

Scripture showed that Israel practiced idolatry in the wilderness, even with their *tent* (tabernacle; 7:43–44), that dwelling might not profit Israel (cf. Jer 3:16; 7:4–15). Until Solomon's day, even in the land Israel did not have a stationary temple (7:47); nor, the prophet showed, did God need one (7:48–50; cf. 2 Sam 7:6–7; 1 Chron 17:5–6). Even David's *favor with God* did not allow him to build the temple (7:46; cf. 1 Kgs 8:17–19, 27). Although the temple accommodated human need, God desired pure worship, not simply a place or institution.

Given the temple charge against Stephen, his quotation of Isa 66:1 (Acts 7:49–50) will command attention.⁸⁵⁰ The LXX and Jewish tradition often applied to idols the term translated *made with human hands* (7:48),⁸⁵¹ a connection at which Stephen has hinted in 7:41. Israel could make even the temple into an idol! By contrast, it was God's own "hand" that "made" everything (7:50), evoking the biblical image of folly in a created being worshipping what it created (Isa 46:6–7).

In the LXX, *place of my rest* (Acts 7:49; Isa 66:1) often refers to the ark of the covenant. The new "place" (7:49) of worship was where God was (7:33), and God was dwelling in the midst of Jesus's community through the Holy Spirit (2:4; 4:31).⁸⁵² OT prophets warned against abusing the temple and rituals (Isa 1:12–17; Amos 5:21–27; Mic 3:9–12; Jer 7:4–15), sometimes drawing the temple establishment's wrath (Jer 20:1–2; 26:8–15).

⁸⁴⁹ E.g., *Sib. Or.* 5.143, 159–60; 4 *Ezra* 3:28, 31; 2 *Bar.* 67:7; cf. Roman-period interpretation of Dan 2:38–43.

⁸⁵⁰ Ancient exegetical principle would justify it: *house* and *build* in 7:49 link with the language of 2 Sam 7:13 implied in Acts 7:47, and qualify it. Expositors of the Torah often wove in a reading from the prophets afterward.

⁸⁵¹ E.g., Lev 26:1, 30; Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6; Dan 5:4, 23; Acts 19:26; *Sib. Or.* 3.606, 618, 722–23; Philo, *Mos.* 1.303; 2.165; *Embassy* 290; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.280. For the temple, cf. Mark 14:58; Heb 9:11, 24; cf. 2 Cor 5:1; Col 2:11.

⁸⁵² Later rabbis often called God himself "the place," to underline his omnipresence (e.g., 3 *En.* 18:24; *m. Abot* 2:9, 13; 3:14; *t. Sanh.* 1:2; 13:1, 6; 14:3, 10; *Sipre Num.* 11.2.3), an emphasis Stephen would have appreciated.

7:51–53: RETURNING THE CHARGE: UNDERMINING THE LAW

Most major characters in Luke-Acts are filled with the Spirit and speak God's message with signs; the apostles and their signs-working colleagues follow the paradigm of Jesus (in the Gospel) and of Moses (7:36) and the prophets in the OT (Luke 1:17; 4:25–26; 9:8, 19). Likewise, the rejection of the apostles fits the paradigm of Jesus's rejection (Luke 4:24; 13:31–35; 24:19–20) and that of the prophets (Luke 6:22–23; 11:47–51).⁸⁵³ Stephen himself follows the pattern of the rejected prophet here (see comment on 7:51).⁸⁵⁴

Orators would use speeches' closing perorations to rouse emotion.⁸⁵⁵ Stephen saves both his harshest criticisms (7:51–53) and his most explicit christological statements (7:52, 56) for the end of his speech, just as Paul saves the points least acceptable to his audience for the end of his speech in 17:30–31.⁸⁵⁶ The rapport-building pronoun in "our fathers" (7:11–19, 38–39, 44–45; cf. 13:17, 32; 24:14; 26:6; 28:17) suddenly becomes "your fathers" (7:51–72).⁸⁵⁷

Returning charges against one's accusers was standard rhetorical practice in all periods of Greek and Roman forensic rhetoric.⁸⁵⁸ Had Stephen's accusers charged him with opposition to the law (6:11–14)? Stephen now returns the charge with interest (7:51–53). It was in fact his accusers who were the law's violators: spiritually uncircumcised (7:51), murderers of the prophets (7:52), and general disobeyers of the law (7:53). But Stephen is not simply charging the false witnesses (6:11–13); he violates a cardinal rule of forensic rhetoric⁸⁵⁹ by condemning his *judges*! Orators often concluded by *praising* judges and/or leaving matters in their hands.⁸⁶⁰ This depiction of Stephen would not of course bother Luke's ancient audience: while attacking one's unjust judges was poor rhetoric, it was noble

⁸⁵³ Tannehill, *Acts*, 32–33.

⁸⁵⁴ R. I. Denova, *The Things Accomplished among Us: Prophetic Tradition in the Structural Pattern of Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 141; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 162, 167–68. For Luke's characterization of Stephen as a prophet, see Stronstad, *Prophethood*, 86–90.

⁸⁵⁵ E.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.72.184–89.

⁸⁵⁶ Sometimes arguments reserved a special, irrefutable, clinching component for the very end (Cicero, *Quinct.* 25.78–80). Orators often also recapitulated points toward the end (or sometimes earlier, e.g., Demosthenes, *Fals. leg.* 177), but Stephen could not safely offer these points explicitly earlier.

⁸⁵⁷ Ancestral sins, however, provided a common prophetic target (e.g., Jer 2:5; 3:25; 7:25–26; 44:9; Zech 1:2–4; 8:14).

⁸⁵⁸ E.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.3.37; Aeschines, *Embassy* 3, 14, 56, 69; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 24; Cicero, *Rosc. Amer.* 30.82–45.132; *Cael.* 13.31; 24.60; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.14.211.

⁸⁵⁹ *Rhet. Alex.* 18, 1433a.20–24; 36, 1442a.14–16.

⁸⁶⁰ E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 14.47, §144; Aeschines, *Timarchus* 89, 196; Cicero, *Mil.* 38.105.

philosophy.⁸⁶¹ Many people in antiquity understood the notion of a court charging an innocent person but themselves being truly on trial before God, truth, and/or the world.⁸⁶²

Stephen's opponents further the history of rejecting prophets (7:52) by resisting the prophetic (2:17–18) Holy Spirit, now speaking through Stephen (7:51; cf. 6:10; Luke 6:22–23; 12:10–12; Isa 63:10). Far from being anti-Jewish, Stephen's language is eminently Jewish, including *uncircumcised in heart*⁸⁶³ and *ears*.⁸⁶⁴ In LXX Deut 10:16, Moses summons Israel to circumcise their hearts⁸⁶⁵ and stop being “stiff-necked.”⁸⁶⁶ Jewish tradition envisioned corporate responsibility.⁸⁶⁷

Their ancestors' persecution of prophets (Acts 7:52; cf. Luke 4:24; 6:22–23; 11:49–51; 13:33–34; 22:64) recalls Scripture (1 Kgs 18:4, 13; Neh 9:26; cf. 2 Chron 24:20–22; Jer 26:21–23) but was greatly amplified in Jewish tradition.⁸⁶⁸ Because Jesus's death climaxed this trajectory, it would bring judgment on that generation (Luke 11:50–51), fulfilled in Jerusalem's destruction (Luke 19:42–44; 21:6, 20–24).

The idea that the law was mediated through angels could be related to the support of angels in Moses's mission (Exod 3:2; 14:19; 23:20; Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17–18);⁸⁶⁹ it was usually intended to exalt the law. Thus those who “received the commandments” and “obtained the law” would be punished all the more severely (4 Ezra 7:72, OTP; cf. 9:32).

7:54–8:1A: STEPHEN FOLLOWS HIS MARTYRED LORD

It is not surprising that Stephen's peers would have preserved his memory (possibly also others; cf. 9:1; 22:4). Many respected martyrs and recounted

⁸⁶¹ Xenophon, *Apol.* 32–33; *Mem.* 4.4.4; 2 Macc 7:14–19; 4 Macc 5–12. God is the true judge (Job 16:19–21; Isa 54:17; Jer 50:34; 51:36; Lam 3:58–66; *m. Abot* 4:22).

⁸⁶² E.g., Xenophon, *Apol.* 29; Justin, *Epit.* 9.4.10; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.69.177; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.2.17–18; 4.1.123; Maximus of Tyre 3.8; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.1.

⁸⁶³ I.e., spiritually pagan or gentile, Lev 26:41; Jer 9:26; Ezek 44:7, 9; 1QpHab 11.12–13.

⁸⁶⁴ Cf. 1QHa 21.6; for spiritual deafness, Isa 6:10 (in Acts 28:27); Jer 6:10; 1 En. 90:7.

⁸⁶⁵ Cf. Deut 30:6; Jer 4:4; *Jub.* 1:23; 1QS 5:5; 4Q504 f4.11; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.304–5; Rom 2:27–29; Col 2:11.

⁸⁶⁶ For stiff-necked, see, e.g., LXX Exod 33:3, 5; 34:9 (cf. 32:9); Deut 9:6, 13; Bar 2:30; Neh 9:16–17; the cluster of such terms in the account of the golden calf is relevant here (Acts 7:40–41).

⁸⁶⁷ E.g., Neh 1:6; 9:2, 26–30, 34–35; Ezra 9:7; Dan 9:16; 4Q434 f1.2.3.

⁸⁶⁸ 1 En. 89:51; *Jub.* 1:12; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.38; *Mart. Isa.*; *Lives of the Prophets* 2:1; 6:1; 7:1–2; cf. CD 7.17–18.

⁸⁶⁹ E.g., Deut 33:2 LXX; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; later rabbis; perhaps 4Q521 f2.2+2.4.2.

stories about them, although over the course of generations many embellished details. Jewish people praised those who died for God’s law;⁸⁷⁰ Stephen, rather than his accusers, follows in those martyrs’ steps. He provides a narrative illustration of Jesus’s summons to martyrdom in Luke 9:23 and 14:27.

Rejected Stephen (Acts 7:51) follows the pattern of Jesus and the prophets (7:52), Moses and the patriarchs (7:5, 9, 27–28, 37), whereas his opponents resemble those who persecuted the prophets (7:52). Stephen follows his Lord’s model especially in martyrdom:⁸⁷¹

Jesus in Luke’s passion narrative ⁸⁷²	Stephen
Hearing before Council (Luke 22:66)	Hearing before Council (Acts 6:12)
Announces Son of Man at God’s right hand (Luke 22:69)	Sees and announces Son of Man at God’s right hand (Acts 7:55–56)
Condemned after his own testimony (22:70–72)	Condemned after his own testimony (Acts 7:56–57)
Commits his spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46)	Commits his spirit to Jesus (Acts 7:59)
<i>Forgive them</i> (Luke 23:34)	“Forgive them” (Acts 7:60)

Like Jesus (and later Paul), and unlike the apostles who acted as a group, Stephen stands alone at his trial – apart from divine help. The audience’s hostility to Stephen’s message (7:54, 57) frames Stephen’s revelation of the exalted Lord (7:55–56), contrasting human resistance against the Spirit (7:51) with obedience to the Spirit (cf. 2:17–18; 6:10). The allusion to Luke 22:69 imports the idea of eschatological judgment; Jesus, who was condemned at his trial but would someday judge his accusers, now stands to vindicate his witness against the same Council (Luke 12:8–9).

⁸⁷⁰ E.g., 2 Macc 7:30, 40; 4 Macc 6:27, 30. For *anti*-Jewish martyr stories, see *CPJ* 2:55–107, §§154–59.

⁸⁷¹ That Christian martyrs have often imitated Jesus is not surprising; cf., e.g., *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1998), 132, 133, 212–13, 235, 252; P. Marshall, L. Gilbert, and N. Shea, *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 62.

⁸⁷² If one extends beyond the section, one may note both being “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1; Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; cf. “wisdom” in Luke 2:52; Acts 6:3, 10; and “power,” Luke 4:14; Acts 6:8); miracles (Acts 2:22; 6:8); a blasphemy charge (Luke 5:21; Acts 6:11); rejection of prophets (Luke 4:24; Acts 7:52); and transfiguration (Luke 9:29; Acts 6:15; for these parallels, see Stronstad, *Prophethood*, 100).

Just as Stephen inverts the charges in 7:51–53, so Luke’s narrative ironically inverts them in 7:56, 58, and 60, confirming Stephen’s message.⁸⁷³ It is not in fact Stephen but his judges who are really on trial:

Jewish expectations for the condemned	Events in this passage
Judge stands to render verdict (or witnesses stand to testify)	Jesus stands as eschatological, heavenly judge or witness (7:55–56)
The condemned is stripped for execution	The false witnesses strip themselves (7:58)
The condemned must confess sins	Stephen confesses their sins, not his own (7:60)

Luke’s speech reports are concise (cf. Acts 2:40) and when he has provided a sufficient sample he often reports their interruption (7:54; 10:44; 17:32; 26:24), a feature found in many other ancient settings and writers.⁸⁷⁴

The Greek text mentions their “hearts” (7:54), confirming Stephen’s diagnosis of uncircumcised hearts (7:51) that connected them with their ancestors (7:39). That *they ground their teeth* (7:54) displays the anger of the wicked against the righteous,⁸⁷⁵ but in the context of Luke-Acts it prefigures their eschatological anguish (Luke 13:28).⁸⁷⁶

Stephen’s speech opens with *the God of glory* (7:2) and closes with his vision of *the glory of God* (7:55); Jesus is naturally in that glory (Luke 24:26; cf. 9:26, 31–32; 21:27).⁸⁷⁷

The heavens opened (7:56) is the language of divine revelation⁸⁷⁸ and recalls Jesus’s empowerment by the Spirit in Luke 3:21 (as Stephen is “filled” with the Spirit here). It also reveals the divine in heaven rather than in the temple (Acts 7:49). *The Son of Man* recalls Jesus’s self-title (twenty-five times in Luke’s Gospel) and ultimately the eschatological, heavenly Son of Man of Dan 7:13–14 (echoed in Luke 21:27 and

⁸⁷³ See here C. S. Keener, “A Note on Inverted Guilt in Acts 7:55–60,” *JGRCJ* 5 (2008): 41–44.

⁸⁷⁴ See, e.g., Livy 3.40.5; Cicero, *Prov. cons.* 8.18; *Or. Brut.* 40.138; comment at Acts 2:13; esp. D. L. Smith, *Rhetoric of Interruption*; idem, “Interrupted Speech in Luke-Acts,” *JBL* 134 (1, 2015): 177–91.

⁸⁷⁵ Ps 35:16; 37:12; cf. Ps 112:10; Lam 2:16.

⁸⁷⁶ Matt 8:11–12; cf. 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; *Sib. Or.* 2.203, 305; 8.86, 105, 125.

⁸⁷⁷ That Stephen gazed (*atenizō*) on heavenly glory (7:55) might recall others gazing on Stephen’s (6:15).

⁸⁷⁸ E.g., Ezek 1:1; Acts 10:11; 3 Macc 6:18; 2 Bar. 22:1; *T. Ab.* 7:3A.

probably 5:24; 6:5).⁸⁷⁹ As the Lord of Ps 110:1, Jesus normally sits at the Father's right hand (Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33–34), but here he stands, perhaps like witnesses offering testimony or judges offering verdicts.⁸⁸⁰ Certainly God would arise to judge and vindicate his cause⁸⁸¹ and defend his servants (Ps 109:31). Jesus, who was condemned at his trial but would someday judge his accusers, now stands to vindicate his witness against the same Council.

Their ears could not bear Stephen's message (7:57),⁸⁸² because their ears were uncircumcised (as in 7:51; cf. 28:26–27). The mob's *loud shout* against Stephen (7:57) contrasts with his *loud shout* (the same Greek expression) for the Lord to forgive them (7:60); like other mobs, they *rushed together* (19:29; cf. Luke 8:33).

Against some interpreters, the Council lacked authority to execute capital sentences,⁸⁸³ though the one sphere normally delegated to their jurisdiction involved offenses against the temple (cf. 21:28; 24:6). Nevertheless, the governor came to Jerusalem only for festivals (cf. 23:33), and mob violence is well-attested in the period.⁸⁸⁴ If no unrest followed, a governor might turn a blind eye to a convenient lynching after the fact.⁸⁸⁵ Luke may have telescoped two events, but though mob violence rarely followed a hearing directly (cf. 18:17; 26:10), Stephen's provocation climaxed a series of confrontations, and some may have acted on their own (cf. *enraged* in 5:33; 7:54). Here no Gamaliel intervenes; his harsher young protégé Saul appears instead (7:58).

Luke sometimes introduces important new characters initially in minor roles (e.g., 4:36–37). While addressing Stephen's martyrdom, this passage introduces the persecutor Saul (7:58). Paul's subsequent letters attest his persecution of Christians (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). Luke will later provide Paul–Stephen parallels (e.g., Acts 21:28 with 6:13), as he parallels

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. also the interpretation of Daniel in 1 *En.* 48:4–10; 69:26–29; 4 *Ezra* 13; also relevant here is the corporate suffering before exaltation in the context of Dan 7:21–22, 25–27.

⁸⁸⁰ Cf. *t. Sanh.* 6:2; Trites, *Witness*, 132; speakers would stand, including lawyers (Pliny, *Ep.* 1.23.2).

⁸⁸¹ E.g., Ps 9:19; 74:22; 82:1, 8; Isa 3:13; *T. Mos.* 10:3.

⁸⁸² Cf. mobs in Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.26; unjust judges in *Sipra Qedoshim* par. 4.206.2.7–10.

⁸⁸³ See John 18:31; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200; *War* 2.117; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 32–43; R. E. Brown, *Death*, 363–72.

⁸⁸⁴ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 37.12.1; *Sent. Syr. Men.* 139–42; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.22–24. For executing apostates being heroic, see, e.g., 1 Macc 2:24–27, 44; 3 Macc 7:14–15; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.54–57; 2.253; cf. comparable events in regions today.

⁸⁸⁵ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 17. Pilate probably became especially accommodating after Sejanus's fall in 31 CE.

Stephen with Jesus here.⁸⁸⁶ Stephen and his circle undoubtedly laid seeds for Paul's theology (and probably his conversion).

Saul's name recalls the famous Benjamite king *Shaul* (13:21), appropriate for a Benjamite (Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5),⁸⁸⁷ his parents may have also chosen its Greek form *Saulos* because of its assonance with his Roman name *Paulus* (Acts 13:9). (Luke certainly did not invent the name; the Greek term, as opposed to the Semitic name, means "effeminate," a designation that males considered insulting.) Saul probably belonged to the radical wing of the Hellenist synagogue mentioned in 6:9; *at the feet* in 7:58 may even suggest a leadership role (cf. 4:35, 37; 5:1), a prominence more explicit in 8:3; 9:1, 31.⁸⁸⁸ Highest leadership normally belonged to elders, whereas Saul remained here *a young man* (7:58). The Greek term spans a wide range of meaning, from adolescence to as old as forty; here Saul may be in his late teens or early twenties, having completed adolescent studies under Gamaliel (22:3). Youth was associated with strength and vigor on the one hand and passion, rashness, and violence on the other,⁸⁸⁹ but some boasted that they advanced beyond their peers and achieved status in relative youth (cf. Gal 1:14).⁸⁹⁰

Witnesses were to be the first to cast stones at the person convicted of a capital charge (Deut 17:7). Ironically, the witnesses who stone Stephen are false witnesses (Acts 6:13), the prescribed penalty for whom, in a capital case, was death (Deut 19:19); Luke crafts the narrative (e.g., they strip themselves rather than Stephen) to underline this irony.

Stephen's killers *dragged him out of the city* (7:58; cf. 14:19; Luke 20:12, 15), normal procedure before execution.⁸⁹¹ Stones were ready at hand, and stoning was often a mob action (Luke 20:6; John 8:59), both in Judea⁸⁹² and abroad.⁸⁹³ Ancient thinkers could envision it as happening

⁸⁸⁶ Tannehill, *Acts*, 99.

⁸⁸⁷ David's predecessor Saul was initially a positive figure; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 6.63; L. H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Saul," *HUCA* 53 (1982): 45–99.

⁸⁸⁸ This need not rank Saul among those who recruited false witnesses in 6:11, 13. See Acts 23:1; Phil 3:6.

⁸⁸⁹ E.g., Cicero, *Rosc. Amer.* 14.39; Seneca, *Trojan Women* 250–51; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 2.1–2; indolence in Justin, *Epit.* 36.1.1.

⁸⁹⁰ E.g., Cicero, *Brut.* 93.323; *Phil.* 14.10.28; Nicolaus, *Aug.* 15 (*FGrH* 129); Sus 50; Wis 8:10; Josephus, *Life* 9, 80; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1447–53. Cf. the inscription in B. J. Wright, "The First-Century Inscription of Quintus Sulpicius Maximus: An Initial Catalog of Lexical Parallels with the New Testament," *BBR* 27 (1, 2017): 53–63 (55).

⁸⁹¹ E.g., 1 Kgs 21:13; Josephus, *War* 4.360; *Apoll.* K. Tyre 50.

⁸⁹² E.g., 1 Kgs 12:18; Josephus, *War* 4.200; *Ant.* 6.358; 14.24; 16.394; 17.216; *Life* 76, 303.

⁸⁹³ E.g., Polybius 1.69.10, 13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.59.1; 9.48.2; Virgil, *Aen.* 1.150; Quintus Curtius 7.2.1; Lucian, *Peregr.* 19.

unexpectedly even in a civic assembly, despite subsequent regret (Libanius, *Decl.* 36.19, 47). Although Stephen's chief opponents were not the Council (Acts 6:9–12; 7:1), on occasion even Jerusalem's leaders hurled stones at each other (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.180, 213). Later, when no governor was around, the high priest Ananus had James brother of Jesus and others stoned (20.200).

Relevant to 6:11, however, stoning was also appropriate for blasphemy,⁸⁹⁴ and must be done outside the city (Num 15:35–36). The mob setting limits the value of later idealized directions, but ideally the convicted person would be stripped, knocked from a height, and then stoned (*m. Sanh.* 6:3–4; *Sipre Deut.* 220.1.2, 6). Scripture and Jewish tradition recognized that sometimes the people stoned or nearly stoned righteous victims (1 Sam 30:6; 1 Kgs 21:13), even God's prophets (Exod 17:4; Num 14:10; 2 Chron 24:21; Luke 13:34).⁸⁹⁵

The *coats* the witnesses removed (7:58; 22:20) were *himatia*, outer garments, but ancient writers sometimes considered this (relative) nakedness.⁸⁹⁶ Their behavior is not surprising, since laying aside garments was customary for strenuous activities.⁸⁹⁷ But why should Luke mention it? The guilty were normally stripped before executions;⁸⁹⁸ here, in narrative irony, the truly guilty strip themselves.

Stephen kneels, a common posture for prayer (cf. 9:40; 20:36; 21:5).⁸⁹⁹ Since ancients typically offered their prayers out loud (relegating silent prayer to purportedly malevolent practices), people generally heard them. Stephen's prayer for the Lord to receive his spirit (7:59) recalls Luke 23:46, probably an authentic recollection about Jesus,⁹⁰⁰ though also fitting in the martyr tradition (cf. 2 Macc 14:46). Martyrs normally prayed to God

⁸⁹⁴ Lev 24:11–16, 23; John 10:33; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.202; *b. Sanh.* 45b; elsewhere, see Sophocles, *Ajax* 254; Lucian, *Z. Rants* 36. For crowds in the temple assaulting a teacher who violated their traditions, cf. *t. Pisha* 4:13; John 8:59.

⁸⁹⁵ Cf. also Josephus, *Ant.* 3.21; 14.24; 4 *Bar.* 9:31; *Liv. Pr.* 2:1; Matt 21:35; Heb 11:37. Contrast the cowardice of leaders in Luke 20:6; Acts 5:26.

⁸⁹⁶ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 21.50; 22.124; Euripides, *El.* 308; Livy 45.39.17.

⁸⁹⁷ E.g., Apollonius Rhodius 1.364; Thucydides 1.6.5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.72.2–3; Plutarch, *M. Cato* 3.2.

⁸⁹⁸ E.g., Polybius 11.30.1–2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.69.2; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.53, *m. Sanh.* 6:3.

⁸⁹⁹ Also, e.g., 1 Kgs 8:54; Dan 6:10; 1 Esd 8:73; *L.A.E.* 32:3; *T. Mos.* 4:1; 11:17; Valerius Maximus 2.4.5.

⁹⁰⁰ Many commentators note its parallel with a standard Jewish evening prayer (cf. Ps 31:5; *b. Ber.* 5a).

(e.g., 2 Macc 7:37–38), but here Stephen exemplifies Acts 2:21 (the Greek text says, “calling on”) by praying to Jesus, as divine.

Likewise, his final prayer for the Lord not to *hold this sin against them* (Acts 7:60) recalls Luke 23:34⁹⁰¹ and fulfills Jesus’s teaching in Luke 6:28// Matt 5:44. Jewish tradition insisted that the person being executed confess their own sins;⁹⁰² Stephen, however, confesses those of his persecutors. His petition contrasts with frequent dying prayers for vengeance.⁹⁰³ By persecuting Stephen, Saul and his allies were persecuting Jesus (Acts 9:4). By converting Saul, Jesus was answering Stephen’s prayer,⁹⁰⁴ culminating Stephen’s own ministry. In 7:60 (and 13:36), the NRSV correctly understands the common ancient idiom “fell asleep” as *died*.

In 8:1a, Luke closes the martyrdom scene proper with the same character with whom he opened in 7:58: Saul *approved* of Stephen’s killing (8:1a; 22:20) –and thus shared in its guilt (Luke 11:48).

8:1B–4: PERSECUTION DISPERSES JERUSALEM’S CHURCH

The *severe persecution* (8:1), in which Saul becomes prominent (Acts 9:4–5; cf. 22:4, 7–8; 26:11, 14–15), comes as no surprise (7:52; cf. Luke 11:49; 21:12). By persecuting believers (7:58–8:1a; 8:3), Saul scatters them and so, ironically, spreads their movement (8:1–3; cf. 1:8). God’s sovereign plan (2:23) uses him even when he is kicking *against the goads* (26:14).⁹⁰⁵ Saul’s murderous behavior (8:1, 3; cf. 9:1) contrasts with the *devout men* who bury Stephen (8:2).

In 6:8–8:40, Jesus’s Diaspora Jewish followers provide the needed cultural bridge for the church’s mission to the Diaspora. This paragraph offers a transition from the narrative about Stephen (6:8–7:60), to the narratives about Philip (8:5–40); both belonged to the Seven (6:5).⁹⁰⁶ In 11:19–20, Luke

⁹⁰¹ This prayer is not in all manuscripts but one would not expect later scribes to insert it specifically in Luke, rather than another Gospel. It was probably deleted for anti-Judaic reasons (D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988], 577; R. E. Brown, *Death*, 975–80), esp. after the Alexandrian pogroms of the early second century.

⁹⁰² LAB 25:7; 27:15; *m. Sanh.* 6:2–3; *t. Sanh.* 9:5.

⁹⁰³ Homer, *Il.* 22.358–60; Justin, *Epit.* 39.3.11–12; *Vit. Aes.* 133, 142; 2 Chron 24:22; Ps 79:10; Rev 6:10.

⁹⁰⁴ So also Ambrose, *Repentance* 1.10.47.

⁹⁰⁵ Cf. J. L. Ray, *Narrative Irony in Luke-Acts: The Paradoxical Interaction of Prophetic Fulfillment and Jewish Rejection* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1996), 64.

⁹⁰⁶ For the “chain-link interlock” in 8:1b–2, see B. W. Longenecker, “Lukan Aversion to Humps and Hollows: The Case of Acts 11.27–12.25,” *NTS* 50 (2, 2004): 185–204.

revisits generally the ministry of those scattered in 8:4, but in 8:5–40, Luke will highlight the specific ministry of Philip, whom he probably knows by personal contact (21:8).

Luke portrays Stephen's martyrdom as achieving several beneficial effects:

1. Stephen's basic message outlines a theology that could function in the Diaspora
2. Stephen's message provokes persecution, which scatters and spreads the church (8:4)
3. A theological seed was sown in a hearer that would later be reaped on the road to Damascus (9:4–8)

These effects confirm the wisdom of Gamaliel: if the movement is from God, attempts to suppress it would fail (5:39; cf. 28:31).

Although the scattering ultimately extends beyond Judea (9:1–2; 11:19–20), which had limited culturally comfortable options for Hellenists, the specification of *Judea and Samaria* in 8:1 includes both 8:5–25 and 9:32–42, fulfilling another phase of 1:8. These missions appear successful (9:31, 35, 42; 15:3; 21:20). Although "the apostles" in 8:1⁹⁰⁷ does not, against many scholars, *limit* the scattering to Hellenists, they were surely involved (8:5; 11:19–20; cf. 6:9). The apostles in 8:1 maintain their post, perhaps underground,⁹⁰⁸ perhaps expecting the nations to stream first to Jerusalem (cf. Isa 2:1–2; Luke 22:30). Despite Acts 1:8, it will take Philip's example in Samaria and the Judean coast (8:5–40) to get even Peter beyond Jerusalem (8:14–25; 9:32–10:48).

A Closer Look: Stephen's Burial

Here as with Jesus, the righteous mourn and bury the body (cf. 13:29; Luke 23:27, 48–56). Jews considered burial essential (cf. Acts 5:6, 9–10; 7:16).⁹⁰⁹ Some in antiquity withheld it from their enemies or those they executed;⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁷ Fitting 8:14, but perhaps somewhat hyperbolic (9:26, 30–33).

⁹⁰⁸ Ancients often targeted ringleaders *first* (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.40.3; 5.43.2). Jerusalemites who did flee may have lost their property (cf., e.g., Josephus, *Life* 370–71; Heb 10:34; Plutarch, *Sulla* 31.4; *Cic.* 33.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.19.6; Suetonius, *Jul.* 14; 17; 82.4).

⁹⁰⁹ Lack of burial was deemed horrible; Homer, *Il.* 23.65–71; *Od.* 11.71–76; Euripides, *Hec.* 47–50; *Phoen. Maidens* 1447–50; Virgil, *Aen.* 6.365–66; *Jub.* 23:23; Tob 1:17–18; Josephus, *War* 5.514.

⁹¹⁰ E.g., Justin, *Epit.* 24.3.9; Petronius, *Sat.* 112; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.28, 85; Suetonius, *Aug.* 13.2; *Tib.* 54.2; 61.4; 62.2.

defying such decrees was often deemed honorable though dangerous (e.g., Sophocles, *Antigone*; Tob 1:17–20). Apart from exceptional crimes of state, withholding burial was considered wicked.⁹¹¹ Scripture mandated immediate burial even for the executed;⁹¹² nevertheless, the condemned receive dishonorable burials.⁹¹³

Mourning generally displayed considerable emotion, though women were typically more conspicuous.⁹¹⁴ Jews required mourning each person (e.g., *m. Ketub.* 4:4), and mourned loved ones particularly intensely for the first week.⁹¹⁵ Nevertheless, *public* mourning could be prohibited for the condemned (*m. Sanh.* 6:6); the mourning of Stephen's friends also suggests a tacit protest. ****

Although Saul did not act alone (1 Thess 2:14–16; cf. Rom 15:31; 2 Cor 11:24, 26), his heavy involvement is undisputed (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Tim 1:13). Homes, where disciples kept meeting (2:46; 5:42), were considered private, but Saul now violates this privacy (8:3). The outrage emphatically includes arresting women (8:3; 9:2; 22:4), with whom the domestic sphere was particularly associated, and who were usually treated more leniently than men.⁹¹⁶ Although ancient moralists treated women as usually weaker and less courageous than men, disciples of both genders (cf. 2:18; 5:14) here maintain their faith.⁹¹⁷

Despite Luke's biographic focus on key figures, 8:4 and 11:19–26 reveal that "ordinary" Christians also spread the message.⁹¹⁸ The verb translated *went from place to place* (*dierchomai*, 8:4) recurs in 8:40, framing Philip's ministry as Luke's chief exhibit of this dispersion.

8:5–13: PHILIP'S VERSUS SIMON'S SIGNS

Having focused on Stephen in 6:8–7:60, Luke now turns to Philip, the second of the seven ministers he listed in 6:5. Stephen's speech (7:2–53),

⁹¹¹ E.g., 2 Macc 4:49; Sophocles, *Ajax* 1326–69; Euripides, *Suppl.* 19.

⁹¹² Deut 21:23; 11Q19 64.11; Josephus, *War* 4.317; *Ant.* 4.264–65; *Ag. Ap.* 2.211.

⁹¹³ 2 Chron 24:25; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.202; 5.44; 9.104; *m. Sanh.* 6:5–7.

⁹¹⁴ E.g., Sophocles, *Ajax* 580; Euripides, *Herc. fur.* 536; Livy 26.9.7; Luke 23:27; Acts 9:39; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.320.

⁹¹⁵ Sir 22:12; Jdt 16:24; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.377; 17.200.

⁹¹⁶ Cf., e.g., Ovid, *Met.* 13.497; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.10; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.267.

⁹¹⁷ Prisons were not gender-segregated before Constantine's day, predictably often leading to women prisoners' sexual abuse (Rapske, *Custody*, 279–80).

⁹¹⁸ In antiquity, travelers often spread their deities merely in the course of normal geographic relocations.

which shows God working far beyond the temple, reveals the theological groundwork necessary for the church's Diaspora mission, but it is freshly scattered Diaspora Jewish believers who begin to carry it out (8:4). Samaritans rejected the Jerusalem temple, and the eunuch was unable to become a proselyte or pass the court of gentiles there, but God is not bound by the temple's barriers (cf. 21:28).

In Acts 8:5–40, Philip ministers beyond Judeans, beginning with Samaria accepting his message (8:5–25). By reaching both Samaritans and a representative from the “ends of the earth” (see comment on 8:27), Philip's own ministry proleptically fulfills already two of the three points of mission in 1:8: Samaria and the ends of the earth. Geographically, Philip advances the gospel north (to Samaritans) and south (to Africans).⁹¹⁹ It is no wonder that Luke awards him the title “the evangelist” (21:8), the one who brings “good news” (see 8:12, 24, 35, 40; cf. 8:4; earlier in Acts, only at 5:42).

Luke marks the Philip material's structure:

- 8:4: believers *went place to place* (*dièlthon*, from *dierchomai*), evangelizing (*euangelizomenoi*, from *euangelizô*; including Philip, 8:5)
- 8:25: after ministering to Samaritans with Philip, Peter and John kept evangelizing (*euêngelizonto*, from *euangelizô*) Samaritans
- 8:40: *Passing through the region* (*dierchomenos*, from *dierchomai*) Philip kept evangelizing (*euêggelizeto*, from *euangelizô*)

Already Luke has prepared us for this narrative with a kind Samaritan (Luke 10:33–35), a grateful Samaritan (Luke 17:16–18),⁹²⁰ and a statement of mission (Acts 1:8). To embrace the Samaritans without requiring their renunciation of Gerizim⁹²¹ was to agree not to make the temple or Jerusalem, cornerstones of Jewish faith, a matter of division (contrast Luke 9:52–55).⁹²²

Luke's narratives about Philip are more extensive than about other members of the Seven, and probably depend on Philip as his informant (see Acts 21:8–10). Assuming that Philip was a fairly reliable informant

⁹¹⁹ With, e.g., G. Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983), 194.

⁹²⁰ Cf. here F. S. Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts* (JSNTSup 67; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 62–69; V. J. Samkuty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts* (LNTS 328; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 99–121, especially 121. For Luke 10:27, cf. Lev 19:18 with 19:34.

⁹²¹ As later rabbis required (Le Cornu, *Acts*, 403).

⁹²² They may have been received in another Samaritan village (Luke 9:56), but Luke (who prefers neat, hence more reader-friendly, chronological schemes) makes no effort to emphasize that point so early in his narrative. On the relevance of Luke 9:51–56, see Spencer, *Philip*, 54–62; Samkuty, *Samaritan Mission*, 125–50.

(and he seems to have been trusted by Paul and the Caesarean church, 21:8–10), Luke's rendition of Philip's ministry likely depends on genuine historical information.⁹²³ The story is not likely a later invention; Samaritans do not appear in the epistles or other Diaspora-oriented early Christian texts.

In 8:5–13, Luke traces the success of Philip's Samaritan mission. As often in Acts (e.g., 4:30; 14:3), signs invite attention for the gospel (8:6–7, 13);⁹²⁴ Philip is full of the same signs-producing Spirit as Stephen was (6:3, 8). Philip in 8:5 is a specific example of the preachers of 8:4, just as Stephen in 6:8 was an example of the word spreading in 6:7. Neither are apostles, but both are particularly dramatic examples, not merely random ones (cf. 6:5).

A Closer Look: Samaritans

A Jewish preacher's conversion of many Samaritans (8:12) is astonishing, though at least circumcision would not be an issue (cf. Acts 11:3). Long-standing hostility divided Jews from Samaritans.⁹²⁵ Samaritans were circumcised, claimed descent from Jacob, had their own priests, and used a slightly modified form of the Pentateuch, but they denied the rest of Jewish Scripture. Jews regarded them as sinful (4 *Bar.* 8) and some debated whether they were more like Jews or gentiles in various respects.⁹²⁶ Josephus, who counts Samaritans as Jewish apostates (*Ant.* 11.340), insists that they claimed kinship with Jews only when it advantaged them (9.291; 11.341).

Respective holy sites constituted a major point of contention, and conflicts sometimes proved deadly (Josephus, *War* 2.239, 245–46; *Ant.* 20.118–25, 136). In 128 BCE, a Jewish king destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim;⁹²⁷ in the early first century, some Samaritans allegedly desecrated the Jerusalem temple with human bones one night (*Ant.* 18.30). ****

⁹²³ Others who do not see Philip as the source also find genuine information about Philip and a Samaritan mission here, e.g., B. Kollmann, "Philippus der Evangelist und die Anfänge der Heidenmission," *Bib* 81 (4, 2000): 551–65; Pervo, *Acts*, 203.

⁹²⁴ Even historically and today, dramatic signs tend to be reported more frequently in previously less evangelized settings; see Keener, *Miracles*, 30, 260 n. 273, 262, 274, 306, 332–34, 367–68, 383, 384 n. 218, 407, 418, 523, 652, 687 n. 250, 704, 710, 729 n. 113, 741 n. 160, 748, 837 n. 341, 839 n. 357, 845.

⁹²⁵ E.g., Neh 4:1–2; Sir 50:26; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.156.

⁹²⁶ E.g., *m. Demai* 3:4; *t. Abod. Zar.* 2:8; 3:1–5; *Ter.* 4:14.

⁹²⁷ Josephus, *War* 1.63–66; *Ant.* 13.255–56. Samaritans regarded Gerizim as "the holiest of mountains" (*Ant.* 18.85).

Although the ancient city of Samaria remained the region’s one significant “city,” it was now the largely non-Samaritan gentile enclave Sebaste.⁹²⁸ By contrast, Luke speaks here of ethnic Samaritans, and he often employs “city” (*polis*) loosely for even some villages (Luke 1:26, 39; 2:39; 4:29). The “city” of Acts 8:5 is thus a chief Samaritan town, perhaps Shechem or Sychar.⁹²⁹

Peter and John preached in Aramaic-speaking Samaritan villages (8:25), but in a Samaritan town (8:5), the Hellenist Philip could preach in Greek. Both in the Samaritans’ homeland and in their Diaspora,⁹³⁰ inscriptions show that Samaritans spoke Greek and were substantially hellenized.⁹³¹ Samaritans did not accept a Davidic Messiah (8:5), but they were open to an eschatological prophet (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.85–87); according to surviving but late Samaritan sources, he was the prophet like Moses (cf. Acts 3:22–23), the *Taheb* (“restorer”).⁹³²

Luke’s antimagical apologetic contrasts Philip, God’s agent, with Simon the magician.⁹³³ Spencer outlines the contrasts as follows.⁹³⁴

Simon the sorcerer	Philip the evangelist
Works wonders (8:11)	Works wonders (8:6, 13)
Draws crowds (8:9–10)	Draws crowds (8:6–7)
“Heeded” (8:10–11)	“Heeded” (8:6)
Simon is “great power” (8:10)	Philip performs “great powers” (8:13)
Simon “amazes” Samaritans with his claims and magic (8:9, 11)	Philip’s miracles “amaze” the Samaritans (8:13)

Further, Simon claims to be someone great (8:9), like Theudas (5:36). Philip, by contrast, acts only “in the name of Jesus” (Acts 8:12, 16), whose claims (cf. Luke 1:32; 9:20; 23:2) are true.

⁹²⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.292–96; *War* 1.403; Strabo 16.2.34.

⁹²⁹ See Pliny, *Nat.* 5.14.69; Hengel, “Geography,” 70–76.

⁹³⁰ For their Diaspora, see, e.g., *CPJ* 3:103, §513; 3:105, §514; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 156.

⁹³¹ E.g., P. W. Van der Horst, “Samaritans and Hellenism,” *SPhiloA* 6 (1994): 28–36.

⁹³² So central was this concept that the Samaritan Pentateuch adds Deut 18:18 to the Decalogue.

⁹³³ Justin, who was from Samaria (1 *Apol.* 1; 2 *Apol.* 15), traces Simon’s origin to a Samaritan village named Gitto and reports his exploits in Rome (1 *Apol.* 26.1–6; 56.2), but not all his claims easily fit extrinsic data. Associations of Simon with gnosticism arose later.

⁹³⁴ Spencer, *Philip*, 88. Some of these observations overlap in practice. For a different set of comparisons, see Samkuttu, *Samaritan Mission*, 161.

Simon himself is now *amazed* instead of “amazing” others (8:9, 11): God’s agent out-signs the magician.⁹³⁵ Power contests between God’s signs-workers and their competitors (here; Acts 13:6–11; 16:16–24; 19:13–16) evoke earlier biblical portraits (Exod 7:10–12; 1 Kgs 18:21–40). (Ancients often labeled as magic signs performed in private or for selfish ends and especially those performed by competitors!)⁹³⁶ Such power contests have often characterized subsequent missions history and modern evangelism in various contexts.⁹³⁷

Calling Simon “the great power of God,” a potentially divine title (Luke 22:69; 1 Cor 1:24; *PGM* 4.640), might suggest his adaptation of some popular contemporary religious motifs.⁹³⁸ Jesus had warned of false prophets claiming, “I am he” (Luke 21:8); even gentiles viewed human self-claims of deity as foolish hubris.⁹³⁹

Ancients took most seriously exorcisms that included dramatic confirmations (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 8.48), such as appear in Acts 8:7. Luke’s healing report may focus on inability to walk (8:7; cf. 3:2–8; 9:33–34; 14:8–10; Luke 5:24–25) because they signify the messianic era (7:22; Isa 35:6).

Against those who view the Samaritans’ conversion as defective, Philip preached “Christ” (8:5) and “the good news about God’s kingdom” (8:12), precisely as Paul would (20:25; 28:31). Joy (8:8) characterizes conversions in Luke-Acts (see especially Luke 15:5–7, 9–10, 23–24, 32; Acts 11:23; 13:48; 15:3), including in this context (8:39). These Samaritans “believed” – language that elsewhere indicates saving faith (4:4; 11:17; 14:1–2; 15:7, 9; 17:12, 34; 19:6) – especially when explicitly recounting baptism (16:31–34; 18:8), as here.⁹⁴⁰ In 8:15–17, the apostles will come to impart the Spirit, not to reevangelize Philip’s converts or to rebaptize them (contrast 19:3–5).

⁹³⁵ With Gaventa, *Acts*, 137.

⁹³⁶ On ancient magic, see, e.g., Keener, *Acts*, 2:1500–8 and the sources noted there, including Aune, “Magic”; S. R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989); H. Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983), 52–72; A. M. Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the “Life of Apollonius of Tyana”* (JSNTSup 235; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 139–41, 245–52; add now the category nuancing in Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Magic: Freeing the Gospel Stories from Modern Misconceptions* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014).

⁹³⁷ See Keener, *Acts*, 2:1519–20, 2011–12; idem, *Miracles*, 2:843–56.

⁹³⁸ Cf. later Justin, *1 Apol.* 26.3; *Dial.* 120.6; Irenaeus, *Her.* 1.23.2. This could reflect syncretism among some Samaritans influenced by Sebaste’s paganism (see D. Flusser, “The Great Goddess of Samaria,” *IEJ* 25 [1, 1975]: 13–20 [18–20]).

⁹³⁹ E.g., Apollodorus, *Bib.* 1.9.7; Maximus of Tyre 29.4; 35.2; Apuleius, *Flor.* 3.6–13.

⁹⁴⁰ The baptism is “in Jesus’s name” (8:16). Given the weakening of prepositions in Koine, this expression with the Greek *eis* (also in 19:5) is probably synonymous with the parallel expression with *epi* in 2:38.

Even Simon believes (8:13), but unlike most of the converts, he will soon risk failing to *persevere* in faith (8:20–23); Luke requires ultimate perseverance, sharing the early Christian disdain for apostasy (Luke 8:13–14; 22:31–32).⁹⁴¹

8:14–17: THE SAMARITANS' CONVERSION CONFIRMED

In 8:14–17, God and Jerusalem ratify the Samaritan mission. This passage also emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit to complete the mission (cf. 1:4–8), and thus shockingly treats the new Samaritan believers as new partners in the Spirit's mission. Because this mission has the approval of God and the Jerusalem apostles, the informed reader can anticipate the same for the gentile mission that follows. The passage illustrates that Spirit-reception (in the Lukan sense) is not limited to a single pattern (preparing for 10:47), and helps prepare the narrative for the confrontation with Simon in 8:18–24.

Travelers through Samaria were common (Josephus, *Life* 269), and travelers regularly carried news, so word of the revival in Samaria quickly reaches Jerusalem (Acts 8:14; cf. 11:1). The apostles commission Peter and John, two of their key leaders (cf. 3:1; Gal 2:1) to go to Samaria (8:14; cf. 11:22), one of them apparently cured of his past anti-Samaritanism (Luke 9:54). Luke documents how the Jerusalem church recognized each stage in the movement's spread, showing the continuity between the original apostolic mission and the Diaspora church of his own day.⁹⁴²

Although Luke associates the Spirit with conversion (Acts 2:38; 10:44–48; Luke 3:16), his focus is empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8; 2:17–18), which at least on occasion seems to be experienced subsequent to conversion.⁹⁴³ Despite 2:38, the Spirit falls before (10:44), some time after (8:16–17), and sometimes very soon after (19:5–6) baptism. Luke does not impose his theological grid for Spirit-reception onto all believers' experience, which in early Christian sources is narrated particularly in Acts. Conversion initiates believers into the life of the Spirit (2:38–39), but does not automatically

⁹⁴¹ Cf. S. Brown, *Apostasy*; Oropeza, *Footsteps*.

⁹⁴² Johnson, *Acts*, 11, citing 8:14; 11:1–18, 29–30; 12:25; 15:2; 18:22; 19:21.

⁹⁴³ In 2:4; 8:16–17; 9:17; and (by at least a few minutes) 19:6, receiving the Spirit followed faith, being absolutely simultaneous with it only in 10:44. To argue that 2:4 was merely an exception could make sense; by contrast, to argue that up to 80 percent of the initial reception passages are exceptions renders the word "exception" meaningless. More conspicuously, Luke allows for multiple fillings (cf., e.g., 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9).

confer all the *experiences* that this new life entails. The lack of experience here, however, concerns the apostles; it is not the ideal.

8:18–25: CONFRONTING SIMON’S SYNCRETISM

The Spirit comes through the apostles’ prayers and laying on of hands (8:15–18; cf. 19:6).⁹⁴⁴ Although this ministry, like miracles (6:8; 8:6–7), is not limited to apostles (9:17), God may grant a special apostolic seal of approval here as in 10:44.⁹⁴⁵ Nevertheless – against Simon’s persistence in his magical worldview – it is also not like magical formulas that were bought and sold (8:19).⁹⁴⁶ The Spirit is emphatically *God’s gift* (8:20; cf. 2:38; 10:45), and true disciples are not motivated by pecuniary gain (3:6; 20:33–35).

In 8:18–24, God’s agents have to confront the syncretistic, magical worldview of a convert (cf. 19:18); against critics who would associate Christian miracles with magic,⁹⁴⁷ Luke’s apologetic regularly dissociates the Christian movement from magic. The passage also emphasizes the necessity of perseverance. In addition to his role as one of the practitioners of occult power in Acts (cf. 13:6–8; 19:13–16), Simon may also illustrate the danger of apostasy, comparable to Judas and Ananias (Acts 1:18; 5:3; cf. Luke 8:12–14; 22:31–34).⁹⁴⁸

Judas	Ananias	Simon	Elymas Bar-Jesus
Satan entered (Luke 22:3)	Satan filled heart (Acts 5:3)	(Magus, Acts 8:9)	Son of the devil (13:10)
Greed (Acts 1:18)	Greed (Acts 5:2–3)	Monetary problems (Acts 8:18–19)	–
Condemned (1:18–20)	Condemned (5:5)	Condemned unless he repents (8:20–23)	Temporarily judged (13:11)

Simon apparently witnessed some dramatic sign of the Spirit; while this could be simply ecstatic joy (cf. 13:52), prophecy or tongues would fit Luke’s

⁹⁴⁴ Cf. blessing in Luke 18:15–16; Gen 48:14; comment on Acts 6:6.
⁹⁴⁵ In contrast to Philip’s chronologically prior ministry to the Samaritans and another uncircumcised convert.
⁹⁴⁶ One common ancient criterion for distinguishing sorcerers was that they, unlike miracle workers from the gods, were greedy (Reimer, *Miracle*, 139–41, 246).
⁹⁴⁷ Cf. Luke 11:15//Matt 12:24; *b. Sanh.* 107b; Cook, *Interpretation*, 36–39, 138.
⁹⁴⁸ See Spencer, *Philip*, 89, 122–26; Johnson, *Acts*, 152.

understanding of Spirit reception better (2:4, 17–18; 10:46; 19:6).⁹⁴⁹ Given the usefulness of such signs to his theme, it seems strange that he would not articulate it consistently, unless he either takes them for granted or lacks specific information hence *cannot* take them for granted. Whatever Simon saw, it got his attention.

Peter thus pronounces judgment (8:20), although allowing for repentance (8:22; contrast an earlier case of greed in 5:4–5, 9–10). In 8:21, in biblically saturated language, Peter declares that Simon has no *part* or *share* (synonyms often applied together in biblical parlance) in the ministry (the latter term, *klêros*, is translated *share* and *lot* in 1:17, 25–26) or in the kingdom (*klêros* is rendered *place* in 26:18). His *heart is not right* (8:21), reflecting a familiar LXX idiom (esp. Ps 78:37 ET). *Gall of bitterness* (8:23) reflects apostasy toward paganism (Deut 29:18; cf. 32:32); *chains of wickedness*, the expression in LXX Isa 58:6.

Simon's humbled response (8:24) leaves open the question of his repentance (cf., without repentance, similar requests in Exod 8:8, 28–30; 9:28; 10:17; 12:32; 1 Kgs 13:6). Welcomed prayers of others could bring forgiveness (cf. Gen 20:7; Job 42:8), within limits.⁹⁵⁰ Subsequent Christian tradition presumes his apostasy, but may have needed the figure of Simon to condemn heretics (or to respond to gnostics' appropriation of him).

Concluding Luke's section on Philip's Samaritan mission, in 8:25 the apostles follow Philip's example. Philip also precedes Peter in preaching on the coast (8:40 before 9:32–43; 10:24) and reaching gentiles (8:27–40 before 10:1–11:18). As those naturally equipped to bridge cultures, the Jerusalem church's bicultural minority form the bridge for the future.

8:26–33: DIVINELY ARRANGED ENCOUNTER

The theme of evangelizing while traveling (8:25 and 8:40) geographically frames the story of the African official's conversion (8:26–39). Like 2:5–11, this account foreshadows the good news reaching “the ends of the earth,” the phase that follows Samaria in 1:8.⁹⁵¹ God so desires to reach the ends of the earth that he contrives extravagant means to accomplish it: the angel's message, the Spirit's direction, and “coincidences” that include the official's appropriate Scripture text.

⁹⁴⁹ For tongues, see, e.g., Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 188–89.

⁹⁵⁰ Exod 32:32–33; Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; 1 Jn 5:16; 2 En. 7:5; cf. Ezek 14:14, 20.

⁹⁵¹ One could use representative fulfillment to make much larger claims (e.g., Rom 15:19; Col 1:23; Josephus, *War* 2.382).

A Closer Look: Narrative Patterns in Acts 8:26–40

Some dismiss this account as an exotic tale comparable to some in novels; hard comparison with actual ancient novels and historiography, however, suggests that Luke recounts a genuine encounter.⁹⁵² Moreover, even apart from Luke's integrity elsewhere as a historian, Luke does not technically need this account; he already has the standard, institutional version of what Jerusalem believers took as the earliest gentile convert in Cornelius, a story that Luke himself retells three times (10:1–48; 11:4–17; 15:7–9). Acts' plot moves west toward Rome (the heart of the empire in which Luke's audience lives), yet Luke places earlier this important, "inside" story presumably gleaned from Philip (21:8).

Nevertheless, Luke's narration shapes his material in a way that highlights features familiar from his larger story. Philip's ministry here follows a model of the risen Jesus, just as Stephen's death imitates his martyrdom. A number of parallels exist even with the specific passage, Luke 24:13–35.⁹⁵³

Jesus in Luke 24	Philip in Acts 8
Begins traveling with two disciples on (Emmaus) road (Luke 24:15)	Begins traveling with God-fearer on road (Acts 8:29; road specified in 8:26)
Jesus opens the conversation with a question (Luke 24:17)	Philip opens the conversation with a question (Acts 8:30)
Jesus asks about what they are already discussing (Luke 24:17)	Philip asks about what he is already reading (Acts 8:30)
Jesus explains the Scriptures to them (Luke 24:27)	Philip explains this Scripture and others to him (Acts 8:35)
Jesus explains Scriptures "beginning with" Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:27)	Philip explains Scripture "beginning from" this passage in Isaiah (Acts 8:35)
Jesus explains that his <i>death</i> and resurrection were God's plan (Luke 24:14, 18–27)	Philip begins with Jesus's passion (Acts 8:32–33)
They urge him to stay with them (Luke 24:29)	He invites Philip into his chariot (Acts 8:31)
Jesus vanishes (Luke 24:31)	Philip is snatched away and the eunuch no longer sees him (Acts 8:39)

⁹⁵² See Keener, "Novels' Places."

⁹⁵³ Several of these parallels are from Spencer, *Philip*, 141–42.

It is likely that Luke does select details to use the parallel to good effect, especially in terms of the divine arrangements for the encounters. This account also prepares for the account of Cornelius, the gentile convert better known to the Jerusalem church:

Acts 8:26–40	Acts 10
Angelic revelation with absurd command and geographic specificity (8:26)	Angelic revelation with absurd command and geographic specificity (10:5–6)
The recipient’s compliance (8:27a)	The recipient’s compliance (10:7; cf. 10:20–21)
High-status representative of a foreign government (8:27)	High-status (by local standards) representative of a foreign government (10:1)
Description of the foreigner’s office (8:27)	Description of the foreigner’s office (10:1)
The foreigner reads Israel’s Scripture (8:28; cf. worship in Jerusalem, 8:27)	The foreigner prays to Israel’s God (10:2, 30)
The Spirit speaks to God’s agent (8:29)	The Spirit speaks to God’s agent (10:19; 11:12) ⁹⁵⁴
The official’s invitation (8:31, 34)	The centurion’s invitation (10:22, 33)
Philip’s preaching (not narrated; 8:35; cf. 8:30–33)	Peter’s preaching (10:34–43)
The narrative concludes with the gentile’s baptism (8:38)	The narrative concludes with the gentile’s baptism (10:48)
The Spirit acts in 8:39	The Spirit acts in 10:44–47
Philip ends up in Caesarea (8:40)	The Cornelius narrative begins in Caesarea (10:1)

Of course, the accounts also have clear differences: for example, in one, the agent moves toward a southern coastal city, and in the other, northward.

Biblical echoes also appear here, for example, such as Elijah running with a chariot (1 Kgs 18:46; Acts 8:29–30) and carried away, potentially by the Spirit (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:11, 16; Acts 8:39). More obvious is Jeremiah’s ally, the pious Ethiopian eunuch official Ebed-melech (Jer 38:7), and especially Isa 56:3–5, which speaks of God providing welcoming foreigners and eunuchs among his people (reversing eunuchs’ exclusion in Deut 23:1). Luke soon quotes from this section of Isaiah (Isa 53:7–8, in Acts 8:32–33; cf. Wis 3:14). ****

⁹⁵⁴ Despite Luke’s expectation that the Spirit speaks regularly (2:17–18), Luke uses the verb *legō* for the Spirit speaking, apart from Scripture (4:25; 28:25) and prophecy (20:23; 21:11; probably 13:2), only for the gentile mission: 8:29; 10:19; 11:12.

In 8:26–31, Philip obeys an “absurd” angelic command and the Spirit’s voice.⁹⁵⁵ In Scripture, “absurd commands” demand faith (e.g., Gen 22:2; Exod 14:15; 1 Kgs 17:13; 18:41–44; 2 Kgs 4:4; 5:10), including in Acts (10:13, 19–20; 20:22–23).⁹⁵⁶ The term translated *south* in 8:26 (fitting a road toward Gaza) could also mean midday (as in 22:6, the term’s only other NT use);⁹⁵⁷ if one adopts this latter meaning, the command appears even more absurd, since people normally sought shelter rather than traveled at that time.⁹⁵⁸

Why does the angel specify that Philip take the road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza? (Due to the persecution in 8:1, Philip presumably avoids entering Jerusalem itself.) Many note that two roads led south from Jerusalem toward Egypt, but that one joined the coast only south of Gaza; if Philip took the wrong route, he would miss the encounter!⁹⁵⁹ Scholars debate whether Luke refers to a desert *road* (NRSV, *wilderness road*) or to “desert Gaza,” that is, deserted Gaza (cf. e.g., Jerome, Bede). The road passed through desert only *south* of Gaza (Strabo 16.2.32) as it heads toward Egypt and Ethiopia (16.2.31). By contrast, New Gaza (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.88) had supplanted old Gaza, most of which lay in deserted ruins (Strabo 16.2.30); Gaza also bordered desert (Arrian, *Alex.* 2.26.1).⁹⁶⁰

Obedying his commission, Philip encounters a God-fearing African official. He “happens” to be reading a passage that is a primary messianic text in the early Jesus movement. He invites Philip’s exposition. The accumulation of divinely orchestrated events leaves no doubt that God wants this foreigner to hear this gospel.

A Closer Look: Africa⁹⁶¹

“Ethiopia” was one of the primary locations envisioned when people spoke of the “ends of the earth” (cf. Acts 1:8).⁹⁶² *Aithiopia* (rendered Ethiopia)

⁹⁵⁵ An “angel of the Lord” is a frequent character in Luke–Acts (Luke 1:11; 2:9; Acts 5:19; 12:7, 23), at least once being identified as Gabriel (Luke 1:19).

⁹⁵⁶ Among gentiles, see, e.g., Justin, *Epit.* 13.7.2–4.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. also twenty-three of twenty-five uses in the LXX, including Gen 18:1, and a passage including Gaza in Zeph 2:4.

⁹⁵⁸ E.g., Columella, *Trees* 12.1; Virgil, *Georg.* 3.331–34; Livy 44.35.20; 44.36.1–2; Longus 1.8, 25; 2.4.

⁹⁵⁹ F. F. Bruce, “Philip and the Ethiopian,” *JSS* 34 (2, 1989): 377–86 (378).

⁹⁶⁰ The angel makes an implicit wordplay (not uncommon in oracles); *gaza* is both a city (twenty-two times in the LXX) and a term for royal treasure (six times in the LXX) – accounting for the only two NT uses: Gaza (8:26) and *treasury* (8:27).

⁹⁶¹ For greater detail, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:1550–65.

⁹⁶² See, e.g., Strabo 1.1.6; Esth 1:1; Zeph 3:10; C. J. Martin, “A Chamberlain’s Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation,” *Semeia* 47 (1989): 105–35 (118–19); T. C. G. Thornton, “To the End of the Earth: Acts 1:8,” *ExpT* 89 (12, 1978): 374–75.

was not limited to the nation that today bears that name. It included all of Africa south of Egypt. The African kingdom with a queen titled the *kandake* (rendered *Candace*) was the Empire of Meroë, powerful since c. 760 BCE and ruled specifically from its capital in Meroë since at least the early third century BCE. It lay some 200 miles south of modern Egypt and 100 miles northeast of Khartoum in modern Sudan, suggesting a roundtrip journey of at least several months. Greco-Roman sources are unanimous in describing “Ethiopians” as black,⁹⁶³ often conjoined with wooly hair and other features.⁹⁶⁴

Although Greeks and Romans thought that *Candace* was a name passed on to all Meroitic queens (Pliny, *Nat.* 6.35.186), it was actually a title for at least some queens. So far, evidence for the title appears to stop in the mid-first century CE;⁹⁶⁵ this fits a report predating this time (i.e., Philip’s experience), but could also represent simply Luke’s use of the familiar title. Although sometimes queens ruled (e.g., one during Nero’s time; Pliny, *Nat.* 6.35.186), this was not, against some Greek views, always the case. Nevertheless, all Meroë’s queens, regnant or not, were powerful and wealthy. One queen named Nawidemak ruled in the first half of the first century CE. Meroë’s art typically depicts their queens as laden with jewels and many-fringed robes, and notably corpulent. Although Meroë differs from Sheba, some of Luke’s audience may have conflated her with an earlier gentile “queen of the south” (Luke 11:31; cf. 13:29; Matt 12:42).⁹⁶⁶

Only someone wealthy would own their own Isaiah scroll or be reading in a carriage; given the size of an Isaiah scroll, this official might even have a servant to aid in unrolling it. Such wealth fits a royal treasurer. To supervise the queen’s wealth was no small matter, given the famous wealth of Meroë (cf. Diodorus Siculus 1.33.1–4). Trade between Egypt and the Mediterranean world on one hand and Africa’s interior on the other increased the kingdom’s wealth; given the use of Greek in Egypt’s urban centers, it is no surprise that this treasurer can read and converse in Greek. ****

⁹⁶³ E.g., Ovid, *Metam.* 1.235–36; Petronius, *Sat.* 102; Lucian, *Indictment* 6; *Book-Coll.* 28; Heliodorus, *Eth.* 4.8; Jer 13:23.

⁹⁶⁴ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 3.8.2; Sextus Empiricus, *Eth.* 3.43.

⁹⁶⁵ E. M. Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 171.

⁹⁶⁶ See this conflation in Josephus, *Ant.* 2.249; 8.159, 165, 175; much later, *Kebrā Nagast* ch. 33 (Edward Ullendorff, “Candace [Acts VIII.27] and the Queen of Sheba,” *NTS* 2 [1955]: 53–56 [54–55]; Bruce, “Philip and Ethiopian,” 385).

Meroë worshiped many deities, including the sun and especially the Egyptian god Amun, but this God-fearer had traveled for perhaps two months (cf. Herodotus 2.29–32) *to Jerusalem to worship* (8:27).⁹⁶⁷ He was serious in his faith, no mere tourist. But Jerusalem would reckon him a gentile, not a Jew. In Greek, the term translated *eunuch* normally indicates a castrated male (as in Matt 19:12), though the LXX sometimes may use it more broadly for officials. Outside the empire, many kings desired officials relating to queens or harems to be eunuchs (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.12.593); Greeks believed that some peoples also used eunuchs as treasurers (Plutarch, *Demetrius* 25.5).⁹⁶⁸ Whereas Luke knows how to specify proselytes (6:5), he does not do so here. Instead, he five times draws attention to this official's status as a eunuch. This is significant because eunuchs could not become proselytes (Deut 23:1), leaving this man technically a gentile.

This account is strategic. This pious official is not only the forerunner of the African church, but as the first gentile convert, the forerunner of gentile Jesus-followers in general. Halfway between circumcised Jews/Samaritans and a fully gentile God-fearer (Cornelius), this African official practices Jewish faith yet remains a gentile.

Although it could probably travel just some 30 miles a day, the official's *chariot* is probably an expensive, covered, equine-drawn carriage, which he will exchange for a Nile boat once he reaches Egypt. He would have a driver and perhaps additional servants. Although stricter Judeans might refrain from "associating" with gentiles (10:28), the Spirit instructs Philip to "join" (reflecting the same Greek term) this chariot (8:29), as the Spirit will soon direct Peter to accompany Cornelius's messengers (10:19–20). Probably unable to read Hebrew, the official is reading a Greek translation of Isaiah;⁹⁶⁹ a majority of reading in antiquity was done aloud. Inviting Philip to join him in the chariot shows honor to Philip (cf. 2 Kgs 10:15–16; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.488).

⁹⁶⁷ Judaism is not attested in Meroë in this period, but the eunuch probably encountered it in Egypt, perhaps while working for trade.

⁹⁶⁸ People often ridiculed eunuchs' alleged deficient masculinity, but his status as also an official would command respect. Further on eunuchs and this man's status, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:1566–71.

⁹⁶⁹ Meroë had its own language, with (by this period) an alphabetic script, but probably did not have a translation of Isaiah. Greek appears in Nubian inscriptions and was known to elite persons involved in trade. The carriage's jolting (Apuleius, *Flor.* 21.2) probably complicated reading.

For how Luke can apply Isa 53 to Jesus, see comment on Acts 3:13–15; Luke knows the context (cf. Isa 52:13 in Acts 3:13; Isa 53:12 in Luke 22:37)⁹⁷⁰ and surely knows that early Christians often applied it to Jesus.

8:34–40: EAGERLY EMBRACING THE MESSAGE

God continues to coordinate human movements in the narrative. The official's intelligent question (8:34)⁹⁷¹ immediately invites Philip's preaching of the good news of Jesus to him (8:35). Likewise, the official himself requests baptism (8:37), and invites them down into the water (8:38). Apart from Philip's question in 8:30, most of the action is driven by the official (as in 8:31) and/or by God (8:26, 29, 39); Philip simply obeys and follows their lead (8:27, 30, 35, 38, 40). Like Peter's ministry to Cornelius (11:9, 12; cf. 11:13–16), Philip's ministry to the official is God-directed; the gentile mission is divinely ordained.

The question of what can *prevent* (8:36) baptism is the question of whether an uncircumcised gentile can be accepted as a full convert; Peter employs the same Greek term in 10:47: *Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing . . . ?* Jesus uses the same term to oppose hindering those who want to come (Luke 9:49–50; 11:52; 18:15–17); excluding gentiles would be hindering God (Acts 11:17), whose work will not be hindered (28:31).

That both *went down into the water* in 8:38 fits the Jewish custom of immersing proselytes (see comment on 2:38) and John baptizing in the Jordan (Luke 3:3, 7, 21). At the point of his baptism, the eunuch previously excluded from initiation into Judaism is now welcomed into the eschatological heart of Judaism (via the other Jewish initiatory rite, baptism, on which see comment on Acts 2:38). God has rewarded his costly pilgrimage to Jerusalem; his joy (8:39) fits Luke's accounts of conversion (8:8).

The official's conversion begins a series of historically significant individual conversion stories soon to follow: Saul (9:1–19a) and Cornelius

⁹⁷⁰ Teachers often assumed knowledge of context for biblically literate hearers (e.g., *m. Abot* 3:2). On pre-Lukan, Christian understanding of Isa 53, see, e.g., S. Gathercole, *Defending Substitution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 61–66.

⁹⁷¹ The LXX of this passage differs from the Hebrew and can be confusing. The official, however, is highly educated, as indicated by his use of an optative (8:31). For the model here of embracing the proper hermeneutical guide, see M. B. Dinkler, "Interpreting Pedagogical Acts: Acts 8.26–40 and Narrative Reflexivity as Pedagogy," *NTS* 63 (3, 2017): 411–27.

(10:1–48), interspersed with corporate evangelization summaries (8:5–25; 9:32–42; 11:19–26).

About 20 miles (a day's walk) north of Gaza, *Azotus* was a largely gentile city at the ancient Philistine site of Ashdod. Divinely aided transport of some sort appears occasionally in ancient sources, including Jewish stories.⁹⁷² The idea of being carried away by the Spirit, however, already appears in the OT, though not always literally (1 Kgs 18:12; Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5). Just as the Spirit urges Philip to encounter the African official, even before Peter's ministry to Cornelius, so now the Spirit arranges for Philip to preach in cities of the coastal plain, paving the way for Peter in 9:32–43. (Note disciples already in Lydda and Joppa in 9:32, 36.) Concluding his fully itinerant ministry, Philip finally settles in Caesarea (8:40), where the narrative next finds him (21:8).⁹⁷³ Here too he prepares the reader for Peter's imminent ministry there (chs. 10–11).

Luke frames Philip's ministry with *passing through* (using *dierchomai*) and "evangelizing" (using *euangelizô*; 8:4, 40). The only other conjoining of these verbs in biblical or the earliest Christian Greek is the apostles' mission in Luke 9:6, which Philip here continues. Preaching the gospel on the way to one's destination also recalls the apostles' work in 8:25, thus framing Philip's climactic ministry to the "ends of the earth."

9:1–9: JESUS'S THEOPHANY TO SAUL

Luke's narrative now returns to the persecutor (7:58–8:3), converting him from unwilling (8:3–4) to willing participant in Christ's mission.⁹⁷⁴ God, who is sovereignly bringing about the gentile mission despite his church's resistance (cf. 10:14, 28; 11:3, 8), not only converts a persecutor (9:1–9),⁹⁷⁵ but calls him to be a special agent of his mission (9:15), just as God called some biblical prophets in earlier theophanies.

In 9:1–9, Jesus's glory, revealing his divine identity, physically blinds his spiritually blind persecutor, Saul. Realizing that he has been fighting the

⁹⁷² Homer, *Il.* 20.325–27; Bel and Dragon 36; 1 *Enoch* 14:25; 87:3; 2 *Bar.* 6:3.

⁹⁷³ Caesarea had a Samaritan minority; see R. Pummer, "Samaritanism in Caesarea Maritima," pages 181–202 in *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Caesarea Maritima* (ed. T. L. Donaldson; Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000).

⁹⁷⁴ From an involuntary to a voluntary doer of God's will (cf. Rom 9:22–23; 1 Cor 9:16–17). Scholars suggest a range of dates as late as 36, but in view of Gal 1:17–2:1 a date in the early 30s (say, 31–32; Riesner, *Early Period*, 35–74) seems more likely.

⁹⁷⁵ Used also as a model of God calling sinners (cf. Luke 5:8–10, 27–32; 1 Tim 1:13–15).

Lord he claimed to be serving (5:39; 26:14), by persecuting the pious remnant with whom the Lord is identified, Saul repents and obeys. This account is so central for Luke that he repeats its substance two more times (22:5–21; 26:9–18),⁹⁷⁶ similar to his thrice-repeated Cornelius account (10:1–48; 11:4–17; 15:7–9) and the multiple repetitions of Jesus's story (Luke 1–24; Acts 2:22–24; 3:13–15; 10:37–41; 13:23–31).

Saul's *threats* in 9:1 may echo the prayer of 4:29, but God is about to answer the community's prayers in an unexpected way. Ironically, whereas normally one is thrown into prison for murder (Luke 23:19, 25), Saul, the one threatening murder, is himself hypocritically imprisoning others (Acts 8:3; 9:1–2; 22:19).

Those who carried letters from a high official acted on that official's authorization (1 Esd 4:61). Letters of recommendation of various sorts reflect a pervasive custom;⁹⁷⁷ they were usually brief, and designated the recommendee's relationship to the sender.⁹⁷⁸ Recommenders risked their own honor in recommending others (Pliny, *Ep.* 2.9.2), indebting the latter to themselves (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 2.13.9; 3.2.6; 3.8.2). Such letters might request that the beneficiary be treated as if the beneficiary were in fact the recommender⁹⁷⁹ (how Jesus in effect identifies in Acts 9:5 with those Saul is persecuting!).

In contrast to those commissioned by the apostles (6:5–6), whom Saul persecutes (7:58–60), Saul is authorized by the high priest (9:1) – thus at this point still an agent of mortals rather than of God (cf. 9:15; Gal 1:1). This connection also will support Paul's later association of his violence with the very ruling priestly class that accuses him (26:10, 12).⁹⁸⁰ Still, even Luke agrees that ambitious young Saul initiated this phase of it (9:1–2);

⁹⁷⁶ Cf. also 9:21, 27. Variations in these accounts – such as who fell (9:4, 7; 26:14), who heard Jesus (9:7; 22:9), or which point of commission is emphasized (9:15–17; 22:21; 26:16–18) – fit oral recitation practices. Ancient historians focused on communicating the substance more than precise detail (cf. 1:3–11; Luke 24:36–53). The accounts are rhetorically appropriate, however, e.g., underlining traditional Judean ideals for one audience (22:3, 12) and elite hellenistic ones for another (26:14).

⁹⁷⁷ E.g., Rom 16:1–2; 1 Cor 16:15–18; Phil 2:29–30; 4:2–3; Phlm 8–17; 3 John 12; Josephus, *Life* 310–11; esp. Cicero, *Fam.* 13.1–79; C.-H. Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (SBLDS 4; Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972); Marshall, *Enmity*, 91–129.

⁹⁷⁸ Kim, *Letter of Recommendation*, 37–42.

⁹⁷⁹ E.g., P.Oxy. 32; Cicero, *Fam.* 13.5.3; cf. 1 Cor 16:10; Phlm 17; Kim, *Letters of Recommendation*, 7, 37–42.

⁹⁸⁰ Persecution diminished after Saul's conversion (9:31), but he was not its only source (1 Thess 2:14–16).

he may have simply solicited and received Caiaphas's endorsement of his general mission, requesting cooperation.⁹⁸¹ Certainly public documents (9:14, 21) would not openly endorse extrajudicial executions (9:1). Civic authorities, however, often allowed ethnic communities such as synagogues (9:2) to execute other disciplines, such as beatings.⁹⁸² Local Jewish communities retained rights to practice their own customs as ethnic conclaves in foreign cities.⁹⁸³

Saul's access to the high priest (9:1) seems startling for someone still probably a "young man" (7:58), particularly a Hellenist (6:9) and a Pharisee (23:6), but he was advanced in Jewish observance beyond his peers (Gal 1:14).⁹⁸⁴ Moreover, he was undoubtedly from a well-to-do family if he studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3); if his father was a Pharisee (cf. 23:6), probably his entire family had moved to Jerusalem well before Saul's training, since Pharisees were not a movement in the Diaspora.⁹⁸⁵ His status as a Roman citizen (16:37) would also stand him in good stead, not least should questions arise from the governor, Pilate.

The Way (9:2; cf. 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22; possibly 16:17; 18:25–26; 24:14) seems to be the earliest Jewish Christians' designation for their movement following the right path (Luke 13:24–25; cf. 1:76, 79; 3:4; 20:21).⁹⁸⁶ Another Judean movement used similar language to distinguish itself from Jews not following God's way.⁹⁸⁷ Paul ends up embracing this *way* while he was "on the way" (or "road," rendering the same Greek term; 9:17, 27; 26:13).

Damascus was about 135 miles north of Jerusalem, a journey of roughly six days by foot. Because Paul's family was influential (cf. 9:1; 22:3), and because he viewed his mission as urgent (22:6), he may have taken a horse, which would double or triple his speed; yet Acts 9:7–8 might suggest travel by foot.⁹⁸⁸ Luke's

⁹⁸¹ Pilate governed, so in contrast to earlier periods (cf. 1 Macc 15:21; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.194–95), the high priest did not rule and lacked formal extradition rights.

⁹⁸² Cf. Luke 21:12; Matt 10:17; 2 Cor 11:24; *m. Mak.* 3:10–12; *t. Tem.* 1:1; *Sipra Qedoshim* pq. 4.200.3.3; *Sipre Deut.* 286.5.1; S. Applebaum, "The Organization of the Jewish Communities in the Diaspora," 465–503 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 496.

⁹⁸³ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 14.214–16, 227, 242, 245–46, 258, 260, 263; 16.163–64.

⁹⁸⁴ Cf. a comparable claim in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.263.

⁹⁸⁵ Pharisees (Phil 3:5) were concentrated in Jerusalem, so Luke's association of Paul with Jerusalem rings true historically (cf. Rom 15:19; Gal 1:13–14).

⁹⁸⁶ Later, *Did.* 1.2; 4.14; 5.1; 1 *Clem.* 35.5; 36.1; *Barn.* 1.4; 5.4; 11.7; 19.1–2, 12; 20.1; earlier, cf. *Jub.* 20.2; 23:20–21; 1 *En.* 82.4; CD 1.11–16; 1QS 9.18–21; 10.21.

⁹⁸⁷ 1QS 9.18; 1QM 14.7; 1QH^a 9.38; 4Q403 f1.1.22.

⁹⁸⁸ If the latter is the case, the high priest, while in principle endorsing Paul's mission, certainly did not offer any resources.

multiple *synagogues* (9:2, 20) makes sense; Damascus reportedly had tens of thousands of Jews (Josephus, *War* 7.368) and many sympathizers (*War* 2.560; cf. 2.463).⁹⁸⁹ Probably most of Jesus's followers who fled this far from Jerusalem were Hellenists.⁹⁹⁰

Paul experiences an appearance (9:17; 22:14–15; 26:16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8) and “revelation” (Gal 1:12, 16). Pagans spoke of deities' apparitions, but the image here is closer to theophanies in Jewish apocalypses (1 Enoch 14:14, 20–25) and especially OT theophanic call narratives (e.g., Ezek 1:28–2:1) that confess inadequacy (e.g., Exod 3:11; 4:10; Isa 6:5; Jer 1:6; cf. Judg 6:15). Like recent servants of Christ (Luke 9:32–35; Acts 7:55–56), Saul now experiences Christ's divine glory, this time outside the holy land (cf. Stephen's emphasis in 7:2, 30, 33, 48–50). The vocabulary is familiarly Lukan; cf. imagery of flashing and light in 12:7; Luke 2:9; 24:4.

Prostration, often in terror, was a standard response to theophanies (e.g., Ezek 1:28) or angelophanies (e.g., Dan 8:17);⁹⁹¹ the revealer often bids or enables the person to stand (e.g., Ezek 2:1; Dan 8:18).⁹⁹² Early Jewish Christians may have recalled stories of other persecutors struck down at revelations (2 Macc 3:28–29; with repentance, 4 Macc 4:11). Whereas some other opponents die (Acts 1:18; 5:5, 10; 12:23), Saul is mercifully converted.

A heavenly voice often appears in the OT and Jewish tradition.⁹⁹³ God sometimes addresses his servants, doubling their names as here (*Saul, Saul*) in biblical revelations (Gen 22:11; 46:2), including callings (Exod 3:4; 1 Sam 3:10).⁹⁹⁴ Whereas the disciple Ananias soon offers the correct biblical response to such revelations (*Here I am*; Acts 9:10; Gen 22:11; 46:2; Exod 3:4; 1 Sam 3:4–8), educated Saul seems clueless. Doubled names appear three times in Luke's Gospel in Jesus's loving reproofs (Luke 10:41; 13:34; 22:31).⁹⁹⁵

⁹⁸⁹ Earlier, many Essenes may have settled here, likewise refugees from Jerusalem's high priesthood, if CD 6.5, 19; 8.21; 19.34; and 20.12 are intended literally.

⁹⁹⁰ With Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 85.

⁹⁹¹ Cf. also Rev 1:17; 1 En. 14:14; 60:3; 71:2, 11; 4 Ezra 4:12; 10:30.

⁹⁹² 1 En. 60:4; 71:3; 4 Ezra 10:30; 2 Bar. 13:2. In contrast to some other revelations, however (e.g., Acts 18:9; 27:24), Paul is not admonished here not to fear.

⁹⁹³ E.g., Gen 21:17; Deut 4:36; Dan 4:31; Artapanus (in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.36); *Sib. Or.* 1.127, 267, 275; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.282–83; 2 Bar. 13:1; *Pirqe Abot* 6:2.

⁹⁹⁴ That such texts are in Luke's mind may be suggested by the response of Ananias (contrasted with Paul's here), “Here I am,” as in Gen 22:11; 46:2; Exod 3:4; cf. 1 Sam 3:4–8. Cf. *Jub.* 18:1. Luke has narrated the revelation to Moses recently, in Acts 7:31–34. N. Scholl, *Lukas und seine Apostelgeschichte: Die Verbreitung des Glaubens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 68, develops the connection here especially with Gen 46:2–3.

⁹⁹⁵ For Luke 13:34, cf. also Matt 23:37. Less relevant is Luke 8:24.

Saul cannot reconcile his experience of a theophany with the identity behind Jesus's demand, "*Why do you persecute me?*" (9:4). Jesus had already declared that however others treated his agents or those least in his kingdom, they treated him (Luke 9:48; 10:16),⁹⁹⁶ as with God's agents in the OT (Exod 16:8; 1 Sam 8:7; Prov 19:17; Zech 2:8). Martyrs like Stephen share in Jesus's death (Luke 9:23; 14:27).

Saul has imagined that his violence has been serving God (Phil 3:6). Unable to conceive that Jesus now speaks in a theophany (cf. Acts 23:9), Saul can only question, *Who are you, Lord?* (9:5). Because neither pronoun in the Greek version of Jesus's response is grammatically necessary, they function emphatically: "*I myself am Jesus, whom you yourself are persecuting*" (9:5). Jesus already has matters ready in Damascus (9:6), as he had for Jerusalem (Luke 19:30–32; 22:10–13); in Greek, *what you are to do* (Acts 9:6) echoes signs of repentance that indicate conversion (cf. 2:37; 16:30; Luke 3:10; 18:18). Saul's required obedience will include his calling (cf. 9:15; 1 Cor 9:16–17), including *how much he must suffer* (Acts 9:16, using the Greek term *dei* as in 9:6).

A Closer Look: Conversion and/or Call

Gentiles recounted narratives of conversions, often to philosophy;⁹⁹⁷ Jews understood gentiles converting to Judaism, and also conversion from one sect to another.⁹⁹⁸ Some earlier rationalist scholars attributed Paul's conversion to repressed guilt, but current readings of Paul (esp. Phil 3:4–6) undermine those approaches. Sociological definitions of conversion from one movement or way of life to another are more helpful.⁹⁹⁹ Although Paul does not fit features of typical Western converts today (such as progressive socialization before conversion), certainly (like some sudden converts) he was passionate about his beliefs both before and after conversion. Those who allow for divine activity may welcome additional, potentially complementary factors.

⁹⁹⁶ Cf. Mark 9:37; Matt 10:40–41; 18:5; 25:40, 45; and 2 Cor 5:20–21.

⁹⁹⁷ A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933); R. MacMullen, "Conversion: A Historian's View," *SecCent* 5 (2, 1985–86): 67–81. On conversion in Acts, see Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 135–48.

⁹⁹⁸ E.g., 1QS 6.13–23; Josephus, *Life* 10–12. Most suggested parallels with Asenath's conversion in the debatably dated *Jos. Asen.* 10–15 are not compelling.

⁹⁹⁹ E.g., A. F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Paul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

Although some deem Paul's experience visionary,¹⁰⁰⁰ the revelation in 2 Cor 12:2–4 was a secret one, in contrast to his conversion, and belonged to a larger series of visions as a believer in Jesus (12:1; Acts 26:16). Paul himself speaks of meeting Christ (1 Cor 15:8) in a manner distinct from his later visions (2 Cor 12:1).

Whether (with some) Paul was called rather than converted depends on how one defines conversion. Although Paul's change fits the sociological definition of conversion, he converted from one way of life to another, not from Judaism to another religion. What most distinguishes Paul's conversion story within Acts, however, is his *calling*. It fits the pattern of divine call accounts in the OT (Exod 3:1–4:17; Isa 6:1–13; Jer 1:4–19; Ezek 1:1–3:15; cf. Judg 6:11–24; Luke 1:36–39; 5:1–11, 27–28; 24:47–49), two of which have just been narrated (Acts 7:2–3, 30–34). Some of those inaugural calls (Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel) occurred in theophanies, as here.

Paul's experience profoundly impacted his subsequent understanding of Christ,¹⁰⁰¹ although he also clearly drew on existing apostolic tradition. Paul probably retold his conversion story on various occasions (cf. 1 Cor 15:8–9; Gal 1:13–16; Phil 3:5–7); Luke surely heard it (perhaps even in Acts 26:10–18). ****

Saul's companions cannot see Jesus (9:7);¹⁰⁰² Saul sees the theophany but can see nothing else afterward (9:8–9). Saul was blinded by "the brightness of that light" (22:11), but also as judgment (cf. Gen 19:11), in this case temporary and pedagogical (cf. Luke 1:20; Acts 13:11; 2 Kgs 6:18–20). Ironically, Saul's blindness correlates with his new spiritual sight (cf. 2 Kgs 6:17; Acts 26:18); Luke's audience would be familiar with spiritual blindness (28:26–27; Luke 6:39–42; John 9:39–41; Isa 42:18–19; Jer 5:21; Ezek 12:2).

Saul's refusal to eat or drink (9:9) was a culturally understood expression of mourning and repentance,¹⁰⁰³ ended only when he is welcomed into Christian fellowship (9:18–19).

¹⁰⁰⁰ E.g., Segal thinks Paul a mystic visionary who was converted during one of his "merkabah" experiences (Segal, *Convert*, 34–71).

¹⁰⁰¹ See esp. S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981), esp. as subsequently nuanced (idem, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002], 165–74).

¹⁰⁰² They may also hear the sound (9:7) without understanding it (22:9), although, against some commentators, the grammar does not demonstrate this. More significant is their corporate experience of something (cf. 2:2–3) and the divine prerogative of selective revelation (cf. 10:40–41; Homer, *Il.* 1.194–200), esp. here Dan 10:7.

¹⁰⁰³ Cf. 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Chron 20:3; Ezra 8:21–23; Jer 36:9; Joel 1:14; 2:15; Jon 3:5; Sir 34:31; *Ps. Sol.* 3:8; for three days, see Esth 4:16; Arrian, *Alex.* 4.9.4; Euripides, *Hipp.* 275; for four, Justin, *Epit.* 12.6.15.

9:10–19A: PAIRED VISIONS CONFIRM SAUL’S CALL

Visions were apparently common in early Christianity (2:17; 2 Cor 12:1–4). Complementary visions provide critical independent confirmation here (Acts 9:4–6, 10–16; cf. 9:12), just as they will confirm God’s welcome of Cornelius in the next chapter (10:3–6, 10–20; cf. 10:30–32; 11:5–14).¹⁰⁰⁴ Paired visions here underline the dramatic nature of Saul’s transformation (9:13–14), reveal the centrality and confirm the veracity of his calling (9:15–16), and lead to Saul’s restored vision and empowerment by the Holy Spirit for his mission (9:17–19a).

Ananias	Saul
“Ananias” (9:10)	“Saul, Saul” (9:4)
Expression of submission (9:10)	Accusation of wrongdoing (9:4–5)
Recognition of the Lord (9:10)	Inquiring who is this Lord (9:5)
“Rise and go” to where Saul is staying (9:11)	“Rise” and go into the city (9:6)
Jesus tells Ananias about Saul (9:11)	Jesus has told Saul about Ananias (9:12)
Ananias is sent to restore sight (9:12)	Saul’s vision blinded him (9:8)
Jesus sends Ananias to his former persecutor (9:13–14)	Saul is restrained from persecuting Christians (9:4–5) and will himself suffer (9:16)
Ananias obeys (9:17)	Saul obeys (9:8)

Prayer (9:11) is connected with a vision here (9:12), as often in Luke-Acts (cf. 10:2–4, 9–10, 30; 22:7; Luke 1:10; 3:21; 9:28). As Cornelius is directed to a messenger of the gospel rather than given the saving message directly, so Saul here is confirmed in his new faith through Ananias. Acts includes more than one “Ananias” (5:1; 9:10; 23:2), but it was a common Judean name, the Greek form of the OT Hananiah.¹⁰⁰⁵ Luke reserves some material about Ananias for Acts 22:12–16, where Ananias’s scrupulous observance of the law makes him a particularly ideal witness.

People outside their birthplace were identified by that place (e.g., Luke 8:2; 23:26, 51; 24:10); *Tarsus* (Acts 9:11) specifies which *Saul* to look for.¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰⁴ Also Luke 1:8–38; the recipients each meet afterward, confirming the independent visions (1:39–56; Acts 9:17–18; 10:17–44). For paired or independent revelations, cf. Valerius Maximus 1.6.3; 1.7.3, 7; Exod 4:27–28; Judg 7:10–14. Even to an individual, doubled revelation underline its importance (Gen 37:7, 9; 41:1–7; Polybius 10.4.5).

¹⁰⁰⁵ M. H. Williams, “Names,” 85.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Scholars rarely doubt Tarsus as Paul’s birthplace; Ephesus or Corinth would have provided Luke simpler narrative unity.

(For Tarsus, see comment on 21:39.) Unlike most preellenistic cities, relatively flat Damascus had many fairly straight streets; following uncertain tradition, some identify this passage's Straight Street with Damascus's colonnaded, major east–west thoroughfare.¹⁰⁰⁷ Tradition locates Saul's host Judas near the western end of the street, and Ananias's house near the eastern end. No signs identified streets; visitors would ask locals, who knew the streets and, in neighborhoods, knew the residents (cf. 10:6).

Saul's reputation has unfortunately preceded him, leaving Ananias stunned. Saul's mission was apparently known in Jerusalem, and travelers had brought news to Damascus ahead of him (cf. 9:21). Like some other recipients of revelations, Ananias queries the revealer (10:14; 22:19–20; Exod 4:10). Jesus then explains his sovereign choice; Saul would be a vessel or *instrument* in divine hands (Acts 9:15; cf. Isa 29:16; 41:25; 45:9; 64:8; Jer 18:6; 50:25; 51:20; Rom 9:21).

Saul will now receive (9:16) rather than inflict suffering (9:14).¹⁰⁰⁸ With just three exceptions, Luke uses this term for *suffer* for Christ's passion; Saul receives here his own passion prediction (cf. later 20:23; 21:11), and the suffering begins by 9:23–29. In this, Saul typifies the disciple's call to share Christ's suffering (Luke 9:23; 14:26; cf. 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 1:9).¹⁰⁰⁹ Jesus's summary of Paul's mission (9:15) and coming sufferings (9:16) foreshadows most of the rest of Acts (especially chs. 13–28). The once-zealous defender of Judean tradition would now carry Jesus's name not only before Israel but also before gentiles and kings.¹⁰¹⁰

Although Saul has not yet been baptized, he has submitted to Jesus's authority (9:5–6, 8), repented (9:9), and continued to embrace revelations from Christ (9:12). The possible former fugitive Ananias thus addresses the former persecutor Saul as *Brother* (9:17). Ancients used such language for ethnic ties (e.g., 2:37; 7:2), alliances (e.g., 1 Macc 12:6; 14:20), or close friendships,¹⁰¹¹ but here Ananias probably embraces Saul as his fellow believer (cf. 21:20; Luke 8:21; 22:32).

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Finegan, *Apostles*, 61.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ray, *Irony*, 64, finds here an example of narrative irony. Paul eventually faces the same charges as Stephen (Acts 6:13; 21:28).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Like philosophers' suffering catalogues (see J. T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel* [SBLDS 99; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988]), Luke's narrations of Paul's afflictions confirm that his life comports with his teaching (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.2.38; 6.2.74; 6.8.100).

¹⁰¹⁰ For his gentile mission, cf. Rom 1:5; 11:13; 15:16, 18; Gal 1:16; 2:7–9; Eph 3:1–8; Col 1:25–27. For kings, cf. Luke 21:12–13; Acts 26:2, 19, 26–27.

¹⁰¹¹ E.g., Euripides, *Iph. Taur.* 497–98; Plutarch, *Many Friends* 2, *Mor.* 93E; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.23.1.

That Paul should be “filled with the Spirit” here is crucial for his mission (cf. Acts 1:8; 13:4, 9; 16:6–7; 19:6).¹⁰¹² Ananias may lay hands on Saul also for healing (cf. 28:8; Luke 4:40; 5:13; 13:13),¹⁰¹³ but presumably does so at least to impart the Spirit, as in most planned initial receptions of the Spirit (as in Acts 8:17; 19:6; versus spontaneous experiences in 2:4; 10:44). God imparts his precious Spirit to Samaritans, gentiles, and a just-converted persecutor!

Saul’s reception of sight (9:18) fits other signs of the new, messianic era (Isa 35:5–6; 61:1 LXX; Luke 4:18; 7:22).¹⁰¹⁴ His baptism embraces radical theological reversal (see comment on 2:38).¹⁰¹⁵ For receiving encouragement, then food and strength, cf. 27:33–36; yet eating also connotes table fellowship in Luke-Acts: Saul is now a sibling in Christ.

9:19B–31: SAUL’S FIRST MINISTRY AND CONFLICTS

In 9:19–30, Luke offers a first sample of Saul’s controversial ministry. As predicted (9:16), the converted persecutor faces persecution. He faces opposition from his own people in both Damascus (9:19b–25) and in Jerusalem (9:26–30). In both cases, his fellow Jewish Jesus-followers help him escape.

From Paul’s writings, we gather that Luke omits most details concerning a formative period in Paul’s life in 9:19b (*for several days*), a period that Luke, if he knows of it, might consider less strictly relevant to Paul’s call to the gentiles. Nevertheless, Luke preserves enough other details to provide a fitting parallel between the programmatic, opening scene of Jesus’s ministry and that of his apostle to the gentiles.¹⁰¹⁶

Jesus in Luke 4:16–30	Paul in Acts 9:20–25
Opens ministry with a message in a synagogue	Opens ministry with messages in synagogues
Audience is astonished (Luke 4:22)	Audience is astonished (Acts 9:21)
Is this not the son of Joseph? (Luke 4:22)	Is this not the one who opposed Christians? (Acts 9:21)
Jesus escapes violent response (Luke 4:28–30)	Paul escapes violent response (Acts 9:22–25)

¹⁰¹² Cf. Paul’s own reports: Rom 15:16, 19; 1 Cor 2:4; 7:40; 2 Cor 3:3–18; Gal 3:2–5; Eph 3:5; 1 Thess 1:5. Luke does not narrate Paul’s actual experience here; although Paul prayed in tongues abundantly (1 Cor 14:18), Acts does not indicate when he began doing so.

¹⁰¹³ Cf. 1Qap Gen^{ar} 20.22, 29; LXX 2 Kgs 5:11; Hull, *Spirit in Acts*, 102–3; Turner, *Power*, 376–77.

¹⁰¹⁴ The language was familiar, esp. from Tob 2:10; 3:17; 11:11–13.

¹⁰¹⁵ One possible location for his baptism could be the river Barada, which runs east–west through Damascus, near what some think is Straight Street (Finegan, *Apostles*, 58).

¹⁰¹⁶ Witherington, *Acts*, 320.

Although hostility to ministry to the gentiles (Luke 4:25–27) is not repeated here, it will surface later (Acts 22:21–22).

A Closer Look: Gal 1:17–2:1 and Acts 9

Although they write from quite different perspectives (making Luke's dependence on Galatians here doubtful), and Luke's most direct knowledge of Paul's career appears in his "we" material (in Acts 16:10–16; 20–28), Paul confirms the general outline of Luke's account here. (I asterisk events the sequence of which is explicit or strongly implied specifically in Gal 1–2):

Event in Galatians	Pauline letters, esp. Gal 1:17–2:1	Acts, esp. ch. 9
*Paul persecuted Christians	Gal 1:13–14; cf. 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6; 1 Tim 1:13	Acts 7:58; 8:1–3; 9:1–2
*Conversion near Damascus (he later "returned" there)	Gal 1:17 (implied)	Acts 9:3, 19
*Conversion through encountering the risen Christ	Gal 1:12; cf. 1:15–16; 1 Cor 15:8	Acts 9:3–6
*Time in Nabatean Arabia ¹⁰¹⁷	Gal 1:17; cf. 2 Cor 11:32	–
*Damascus three years later	Gal 1:17	Acts 9:23 ("many days later")
Escapes Damascus, let down in a basket from the wall	2 Cor 11:32–33	Acts 9:25
*Visits Jerusalem	Gal 1:18–19	Acts 9:26–29
*Syro-Cilicia	Gal 1:21	Acts 9:30 (Tarsus); 11:26; 13:1 (Syrian Antioch)
Syrian Antioch as Paul's home base (or at least place where his ministry was accepted on a par with Peter's)	Cf. Gal 1:21; Gal 2:11 (Paul as well-known minister in Antioch)	Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:26; 15:22–23, 30, 35; 18:22
Evangelism in S. Galatia	Gal 4:13–14; cf. 1 Cor 16:1; cities in 2 Tim 3:11	Acts 13:14–14:24
Troubles with Judaizers in Antioch	Gal 2:11–14 (by implication; this event probably occurs after 2:1–10)	Acts 15:1–2
*Return to Jerusalem after fourteen years' absence ¹⁰¹⁸	Gal 2:1	Acts 15:2 (some prefer Acts 11:30)

¹⁰¹⁷ Luke either does not know about Paul's Nabatean sojourn or does not deem it sufficiently relevant to his main account to warrant digression; see discussion and sources in Keener, *Acts*, 2:1676–83; more briefly, idem, *Galatians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 55–57.

¹⁰¹⁸ Riesner, *Early Period*, 232.

Galatians shows that Luke compresses his narrative so as to omit parts of three years (a total of one to three years) not relevant to his story (if Luke knew of this period). Such compression or omission was acceptable historical and rhetorical practice.¹⁰¹⁹ The most significant difference is the opposition in Damascus. Many commentators think that both Nabatean and Jewish residents worked together,¹⁰²⁰ but it is no surprise that Luke, given his apologetic elsewhere in Acts, focuses on the latter.^{1021 ****}

The disciples in Damascus apparently provide Saul some instruction (9:19), but then he begins preaching in synagogues (9:20), where he will normally start (13:5, 13–16; 14:1; 17:1; 18:4; 19:8; cf. 16:13, 16; 28:17). Saul preaches God's Son; although Luke agrees (Luke 1:32, 35), he never introduces it into his sources' speech material except for Paul (Acts 9:20; 13:33; possibly 20:28), who often uses this expression (e.g., Rom 1:4, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32).¹⁰²² Saul's successful dialogue and debate (Acts 9:22) develop a strategy (17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8–10; cf. 18:28) probably learned from Stephen (Acts 6:10; cf. Acts 7:2–53, 58).

Saul learns of the plot against him (9:23–24; cf. 20:3, 19) either because it was open knowledge (cf. 9:29–30) or someone leaked it (cf. 23:16, 30).¹⁰²³ City gates were closed at night, but presumably individuals traveling alone could exit smaller doors there with permission from guards. Paul's adversaries are watching gates, as the expected means of egress; they are not watching other parts of the wall in the dark. Informed by biblical models (Josh 2:15; 1 Sam 19:12), Paul's friends

¹⁰¹⁹ See Satterthwaite, "Acts," 345; Pelling, "Adaptation," 127–28; Licona, *Differences*, 20, 36, 39, 72, 98; Y. Kwon, "Charting the (Un)charted: Gospels as Ancient Biographies and Their (Un)explored Implications," pages 59–76 in *Biographies and Jesus* (ed. C. S. Keener and E. T. Wright; Lexington, KY: Emeth, 2016), 73. Here, see Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 21; Bede, *Comm. Acts* 9.26.

¹⁰²⁰ See, e.g., M. E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–2000), 770–71; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 434.

¹⁰²¹ Still, Luke entirely omits Paul's multiple synagogue beatings (2 Cor 11:24; cf. 11:26).

¹⁰²² Earlier applied to Israel and to the Davidic dynasty, it developed messianic connotations through the latter (4Q174 fi–2.1.11).

¹⁰²³ For leaks, cf., e.g., also Justin, *Epit.* 21.4.4, 6; 27.3.8; 29.4.11; 31.2.2; 32.4.3; 34.4.2; 37.3.6; 43.4.8; 1 Sam 19:2, 11; Esth 2:22; Josephus, *Life* 239.

enable his escape from the wall in a basket (cf. 2 Cor 11:33).¹⁰²⁴ Because many cities had outgrown their walls, Paul's friends would have to select carefully the site of his descent; landing in a populated area might make his escape more difficult to detect from afar but more apt to be noticed from nearby. People presumably often lowered merchandise from walls, but the contents were normally not human. Paul's *disciples* (9:25) shows his connection with Jesus's followers in Damascus (9:19), among whom he was now a teacher (cf. 19:9, 30; but cf. Matt 23:8); *disciples* is a common designation for Jesus's followers in Acts, next to "believers."

In 9:26–30, the persecutor from Jerusalem faces persecution there, and barely escapes Stephen's fate at the hands of his former "zealot" compatriots. Like 9:19b–25, this section also prefigures the shape of Paul's ministry among his own people.

Word of Saul's conversion had surely reached Jerusalem ahead of him (cf. Gal 1:22–23), but they had suffered more than Damascus's disciples, some of it at Saul's hand; their reception also foreshadows 21:21. Ironically, Jerusalemites earlier feared to *join* disciples in Jerusalem (5:13), and it was the hostile authorities who feared rather than the disciples (5:26). Here, however, the disciples (believers, 6:1–2, 7; 9:1, 10, 19, 38; distinct from the "apostles," 9:27) fear letting Saul *join* them (9:26). Barnabas, already appreciated by the apostles (4:36), intercedes for Saul (9:27), as he will later take Saul (11:25–26) and Mark (15:37–39) under his care.¹⁰²⁵ Saul joins up with the apostles (9:28), or at least Peter (for a couple full weeks, Gal 1:18).

Now seeking to correct his former falsehoods, Saul debates with his former colleagues – who respond as they (and he) had responded to Stephen (Acts 9:29). As in Acts 9:24–25 (and in a different sense 9:17–18), it is, ironically, members of the group he formerly persecuted who now save his life (9:30). Saul, ready to die in his home city for Jesus (cf. 20:24; 21:13), needed both persuasion (cf. 19:30–31; 21:14; 22:18–21) and some help

¹⁰²⁴ The pre-Arabic tradition for the site of Ananias's house is in the Nabatean quarter against the hellenistic-Roman period city wall (Riesner, *Early Period*, 86).

¹⁰²⁵ In ancient terms, he functions as an agent of concord, as in Cicero, *Att.* 1.3, 5, 10; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.8; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.5; Phil 4:3.

(9:30; cf. 17:10, 14) to leave. Disciples brought him to Caesarea on the Judean coast and probably supplied his fare from there north to Tarsus, where he might have some relatives or the Jewish community might remember his family. Although the Saul of 9:20, 22, and 27–28 surely preached there (cf. Cilician believers in 15:23, 41; Gal 1:21–23),¹⁰²⁶ Luke either knows or has interest in few details about Saul’s Tarsus ministry; he returns to him there in Acts 11:25 (cf. Philip in 8:40; 21:8; “we” in 16:10–16; 20:5).

Paul’s experience in Jerusalem parallels his experience in Damascus: his conversion seems too astonishing; he preaches boldly; he faces threats; and he escapes.¹⁰²⁷

Event	Acts 9:13–25 (Damascus)	Acts 9:26–30 (Jerusalem)
Reticence to believe Saul	9:13–14	9:26
Reassurance	9:15–16	9:27
Saul’s association with disciples	9:19b	9:28a
Saul’s bold preaching	9:20–22	9:28b–29a
A plot against him	9:23–24	9:29b
Paul’s escape	9:25	9:30

The events are parallel because of Saul’s conversion and evangelistic zeal; although we might well therefore expect such events in both locations, by choosing to record the same sorts of details in both places Luke underlines the parallel.

A Closer Look: Gal 1:18–19 and Acts 9:26–30

Although Luke structures his material to parallel events in Damascus, he draws from genuine tradition.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁶ Syria and Cilicia were a single Roman province in this period, hence their mention together in Gal 1:21; also, Antioch (11:25–26) was in Syria.
¹⁰²⁷ See esp. D. Gill, “The Structure of Acts 9,” *Bib* 55 (1974): 546–48.
¹⁰²⁸ See further especially Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 133–42.

Acts 9:26–30	Gal 1:18–19; Rom 15:19
Paul went from Damascus to Jerusalem (9:25–26)	Paul went from Damascus to Jerusalem (Gal 1:17–18)
Paul met the apostles (9:27)	Paul met Cephas and James (Gal 1:18–19)
Paul continued in association with the apostles (9:28)	Paul stayed with Cephas fifteen days (Gal 1:18)
Paul evangelized in Jerusalem, early in his ministry (9:28–29)	Paul evangelized in Jerusalem, early in his ministry (Rom 15:19) ¹⁰²⁹
Paul's stay was apparently relatively brief (9:29–30)	Paul's stay was brief (Gal 1:18)

Apart from omissions that betray different emphases, the one element of Paul's account that contrasts most conspicuously with Luke's here is Paul's claim that he met only Peter and James (Gal 1:18–19), whereas Luke generalizes that he met the "apostles."¹⁰³⁰ While both Paul and Luke are presumably sincere, the former emphasizes Paul's independence from Jerusalem and the latter his continuity with it.¹⁰³¹ ****

Unlike Mark, Luke prefers positive endings, and in Acts 9:31 offers one to this section, emphasizing that nothing will stop the gospel (cf. 1:8; 28:31). ("Church" in 9:31 is also now translocal, underlining the movement's spread.)¹⁰³² Saul may have already been influential in the persecution; certainly it diminished after his conversion (Acts 9:31), not because of lack of hostility (9:29; 1 Thess 2:15) but perhaps for lack of an adequately motivated organizer. The idea of a period of peace between periods of testing was familiar from Scripture (Judg 3:11; 5:31; 8:28) and probably Luke's perspective on Jesus's own ministry (Luke 4:13–14).¹⁰³³ In Acts 12:24, the church has peace because God strikes the persecutor dead;

¹⁰²⁹ Although he probably preached earlier in and around Damascus (cf. Gal 1:17), Jerusalem took pride of place as the theological starting point (Acts 1:8).

¹⁰³⁰ The difference fits Luke's tendency to generalize and summarize (cf. here Bruce, *Commentary*, 206: a "generalizing plural"); the Jerusalem apostles' fuller endorsement of Paul's ministry probably came later (Gal 2:2, 7–9), but the present occasion may (with Acts 15:25–26) serve that rhetorical function for Luke.

¹⁰³¹ Johnson, *Acts*, 174 (noting that these divergences further underline "the essential historicity of those points held in agreement").

¹⁰³² Their being *built up* (cf. Rom 14:19) evokes OT language for God's people (e.g., Ruth 4:11; Ps 147:2; Jer 24:6; 31:4, 28); fearing God continues Acts 5:5, 11.

¹⁰³³ More generally, Luke evokes earlier biblical descriptions of God giving his people rest from all their enemies (Deut 12:10; 25:19; Josh 21:44; 2 Sam 7:1, 11; 1 Kgs 5:4; 1 Chron 22:9, 18; 2 Chron 14:7; 15:15).

in the present case, the church has peace because God converts the persecutor. Devastating as sufferings are to disciples who experience them, they belong to a larger picture of God's work in history, which ultimately prevails.

9:32–43: HEALINGS ON THE COASTAL PLAIN

In the "Hellenist" transition between the Jerusalem church and Paul's ministry (Acts 6–12), Luke prepares for the focus on Paul (Acts 13–28) by alternating between Saul (7:58–8:3; 9:1–31; 11:19–30) and Peter (8:4–40, with Philip; 9:32–11:18; 12:1–24) after Saul is introduced in 7:58–8:3.¹⁰³⁴

The peace in 9:31 allows for Peter's wider travels (9:32–43; contrast 8:1; cf. 1 Cor 9:5). Except for the more general digression on events in Antioch (11:19–30), 9:32–12:24 emphasizes key specific events (or in 9:32–43, prominent sample events) beyond Jerusalem. While Jerusalem remains the theological and institutional center for the movement, the significance of any "center" is decreasing. Peter, the leading Jerusalem apostle, ministers elsewhere in Judea (as earlier in Samaria in 8:14–25; see 1:8), and ultimately finds Jerusalem unsafe (12:1–24, especially 12:17). The lengthy center of this section (10:1–11:18) involves ministry to the gentiles, epitomized in this case by an officer of the occupying army in Judea's Roman administrative center.

Surveying Peter's ministry on the coastal plain, Luke focuses on two healings, which draw attention to the gospel there (9:35, 42) as earlier in Jerusalem (5:12–16). Although Luke's focus will be Peter's ministry to gentiles in Acts 10, he first underlines Peter's spiritual trustworthiness in 9:32–43. Peter's ministry here provides parallels with that of Jesus in the Gospel: the healing of the paralytic (Luke 5:18–26; Acts 9:33–35) and the raising of Jairus's daughter (8:40–56; Acts 9:36–42) and (to a lesser extent) the widow's son (Luke 7:11–16). The accounts also suit Luke's narrative approach in that he often pairs miracle stories, parables, and other stories to include both a man (9:32–35) and a woman (9:36–42; cf., e.g., raisings of a child in Luke 7:11–16; 8:49–56).

Luke's geographic perspective on greater Judea appears as sketchy as that of most other ancient writers, especially concerning the places he has

¹⁰³⁴ Allen, *Death*, 130–31. This shifting of focus between characters appears both in novels and in historiography (see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.194; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Pomp.* 3).

not visited personally. His portrayal of the coastal plain, however, is “completely correct,” fitting his claim to have traveled by road from Caesarea to Jerusalem (21:15–17).¹⁰³⁵ The most significant cities on the coastal plain that were nearly completely Jewish were Lydda (9:32)¹⁰³⁶ and Joppa (9:36), beyond which lay the mixed city of Caesarea (cf. 10:1, 5). In contrast to Philip’s ministry (8:40), Peter’s is limited to Jewish cities and to already established churches.¹⁰³⁷ Peter’s ministry to Jewish circles (cf. also Gal 2:7) makes all the more significant his subsequent role in the Cornelius story in Caesarea.

Recollection of the locations and, in contrast to most miracle reports in Acts, the names of those healed, suggest particularly vivid reminiscences, perhaps still told by Christians on the coastal plain through which Luke traveled to Jerusalem. The Christian presence in Lydda apparently remained strong even in the second century.

Visiting the sick was common practice¹⁰³⁸ – in contrast to healing them. The significance of *eight years* (9:33; cf. 3:2; 4:22; Luke 8:43; 13:11) is that Aeneas’s paralysis was no temporary circumstance.¹⁰³⁹ *Jesus Christ heals you* (Acts 9:34) functions like “in the name of Jesus”: that is, Jesus continues to be the one healing, albeit now through his agents (cf. 3:6, 12–13). One may compare eyewitness accounts of analogous healings today of inability to walk, often leading to conversions, as here.¹⁰⁴⁰ *All the residents of Lydda and Sharon* (the coastal plain on which Lydda lay) *turned to the Lord* (9:35), i.e., were converted (cf. 3:19; 11:21; 26:18–20; 28:27; Luke 1:16–17). Although *all* might be Lukan hyperbole (cf., e.g., Acts 19:10), history amply attests mass movements of conversions.¹⁰⁴¹

As with the healing at Lydda (9:32–35), so in the resuscitation at Joppa a dramatic sign draws attention to the gospel (9:42). Joppa also offers a temporary base for Peter’s ministry (9:43; cf. Luke 10:7–9), again

¹⁰³⁵ Hengel, “Geography,” 27, 29–30, 78, quote from 59.

¹⁰³⁶ See 1 Macc 11:34; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.127; *War* 2.244, 515. Lydda surrendered to Rome and thus survived the destruction of Jerusalem (*War* 4.444).

¹⁰³⁷ See Hengel, “Geography,” 60.

¹⁰³⁸ E.g., Sir 7:35; 4 Bar. 5:22–23; 7:37; Thucydides 2.51.5–6; Valerius Maximus 2.5.2; Suetonius, *Tib.* 51.2; *Claud.* 35.1.

¹⁰³⁹ For discussion of possible causes, see John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 162; Le Cornu, *Acts*, 529.

¹⁰⁴⁰ See Keener, *Miracles*, 1:523–36 (also addressing potential ancient analogies).

¹⁰⁴¹ E.g., S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1964), 31, 235, 257, 364, 405, 446, 479–81; J. J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 87–89.

illustrating the trajectory of the apostolic movement away from Jerusalem alone (1:8).

Close parallels between the raising of Tabitha in Acts and the raising of Jairus's daughter in the Gospel (Luke 8:40–42, 49–56), as well as echoes of Elijah and Elisha stories here (e.g., 1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:32–37), underline Peter's continuity with miracle-working predecessors.¹⁰⁴² Some parallels, such as the upper rooms, are more noteworthy than others (such as mourning death or astonishment at miracles).¹⁰⁴³

Luke 8:40–42, 49–56; cf. 7:11–16	Acts 9:36–42	1 Kgs 17:17–24	2 Kgs 4:32–37
Jairus's daughter dies, apparently from sickness (8:42)	Tabitha dies from sickness (9:37)	The boy dies from sickness (17:17)	The boy dies of sickness (possibly heatstroke; 4:19–20)
Those around Jairus's household weep (Luke 8:52)	Tabitha's advocates weep (9:39)	The widow's complaint (17:18)	The woman's complaint (4:28)
Kept most people out (Luke 8:51)	Put everyone out (9:40)	Elijah acted in private (17:19)	Elisha shut the door (4:33)
–	Peter kneels and prays first (9:40)	Elijah prays (17:20–21)	Elisha prayed (4:33)
Jesus raises a widow's son (Luke 7:14–15); also a community	Peter raises a benefactor of widows (Acts 9:37)	Elijah raises a widow's son (1 Kgs 17:23); the widow is his	Elisha raises the son of a woman (4:34–37) who is his

¹⁰⁴² Narrative shaping, or keying, is compatible with, and need not discount, underlying tradition; see, e.g., D. C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 389; B. Schwartz, "Jesus in First-Century Memory: A Response," pages 249–61 in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (Semeia 52; ed. A. Kirk and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 251, 254, 259–60; A. Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 56. Although gentiles also had resuscitation stories about figures of the distant past (e.g., Pausanias 2.26.5; 2.27.4; Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59), Luke plainly evokes biblical accounts.

¹⁰⁴³ Though upper rooms may have been a common place to keep bodies until burial, the upper rooms in the Elijah and Elisha narratives are not used for undertaking (1 Kgs 17:19; 2 Kgs 4:10). Some compare *Tabitha's* name here and *talitha* in Mark 5:41, but Luke 8:54 omits *talitha*.

(cont.)

Luke 8:40–42, 49–56; cf. 7:11–16	Acts 9:36–42	1 Kgs 17:17–24	2 Kgs 4:32–37
benefactor's daughter (8:54–55)		benefactress (17:9–16)	benefactress (4:9–11)
“Arise” (Luke 7:14; 8:54)	“Arise” (9:40)	–	–
Took by hand (Luke 8:54)	Took by hand (9:41)	Stretched on the child to impart life (17:21)	Stretched on the child to impart life (4:35)
–	She opened her eyes (9:40)	–	The boy opened his eyes (2 Kgs 4:35)
A resuscitated boy or girl sat up (Luke 7:15; 8:55)	She sat up (9:40)	–	–
Jesus hands resuscitated person to his mother (7:15; cf. 8:56; 9:42)	Peter hands her over to her dependents (9:41)	Elijah presents boy to widowed mother (1 Kgs 17:23)	Elisha presents boy to mother (2 Kgs 4:36)
The parents are amazed (8:56); the people are amazed (7:16)	The people believe (9:42)	The mother believes more fully (17:24)	(The mother is respectful, 4:37; she already had faith)
–	Upper room (9:37)	Upper room (1 Kgs 17:19, 23)	Upper room (2 Kgs 4:10–11, 32)

The common Greek name “Dorcas” was the Greek equivalent of the much rarer Aramaic name Tabitha (9:36); both meant “gazelle.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Unlike Aeneas, Tabitha is specifically called a *disciple* (9:36), a role shared with many other women (e.g., 16:14–15; 17:34; Luke 8:2–3; 10:39), though Luke rarely employs this feminine title. Like many women, she is involved in

¹⁰⁴⁴ M. H. Williams, “Names,” 103.

charitable service.¹⁰⁴⁵ Probably these widows are her dependents, rendering them as bereft of support by her passing as was the widow of Luke 7:12 by her son's death.¹⁰⁴⁶

Ancients, especially female relatives, normally washed corpses before burial.¹⁰⁴⁷ That the corpse has not yet been buried, despite the time required for the messengers' journey and Peter's, probably confirms that they seek more than comfort.¹⁰⁴⁸ Because custom demanded burial urgently (cf. Acts 5:6–10),¹⁰⁴⁹ reaching Peter quickly was important (9:38; cf. 2 Kgs 4:29). Joppa, an important seaport, was a predominantly Jewish city¹⁰⁵⁰ and fewer than 12 miles from Lydda.

By strict Jewish convention, even entering the upper room (Acts 9:39) probably incurred a week of ritual impurity,¹⁰⁵¹ but Jesus's ministry offers Peter a model of prioritizing need over purity (Luke 5:13; 8:44–48, 54). Like earlier prophets (1 Kgs 17:20–22; 2 Kgs 4:33), Peter first prays, but then, like Jesus (Luke 8:54), he commands healing (Acts 9:40).¹⁰⁵² Raising reports, often even from eyewitnesses, have continued to persist through history, often accompanied by conversions.¹⁰⁵³

Although he has recently come from fruitful ministry in Lydda (9:32, 35, 38), Peter naturally stays on in Joppa after Tabitha's resuscitation to follow up the new interest that this event has generated (9:41–42). Luke reports Peter's stay in Joppa to prepare for the next scenes (10:5–6). Peter's stay with a tanner (9:43) seems significant; people of status despised tanners, and Jewish towns kept tanners, who stripped carcasses, outside.¹⁰⁵⁴ So disgusting were the odors associated with the trade that later rabbis

¹⁰⁴⁵ See Safrai, "Home," 762–63.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Jewish law recognized widows as particularly vulnerable (e.g., Deut 24:19–21; 27:19; Isa 1:17, 23; 10:2), and Luke repeatedly emphasizes them (6:1; Luke 2:37; 4:25–26; 7:12; 18:3; 20:47; 21:2–3). Tabitha apparently clothed them (Acts 9:39; cf. Prov 31:19–20; 2 Esd 2:20).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Homer, *Il.* 18.345, 350; 24.582; Euripides, *Phoen.* 1667; Ovid, *Metam.* 13.531–32; Apuleius, *Metam.* 9.30; *m. Sabb.* 23:5.

¹⁰⁴⁸ For oblique, polite Middle Eastern requests, see, e.g., John 1:38; 2:3.

¹⁰⁴⁹ See Safrai, "Home," 774.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.205. Unlike Lydda, it perished in the Judean revolt (*War* 3.414–27).

¹⁰⁵¹ Cf. *m. Naz.* 9:2; *Ed.* 3:1; *Ohal.* 7:2–3.

¹⁰⁵² Opening her eyes recalls 2 Kgs 4:35; sitting up recalls Luke 7:15. Peter takes her hand after her raising (Acts 9:41), whereas Jesus took the girl's hand before (Luke 8:54–55).

¹⁰⁵³ See Keener, *Miracles*, 1:536–79.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *M. B. Bat.* 2:9; for impurity, see *m. Sabb.* 1:2; *Meg.* 3:2; *Kelim* 15:1; *Sipre Deut.* 258.1.1. Some may have believed that proximity to water (Acts 10:6) could mitigate impurity (*t. Ahilot* 18:2); but tanneries were often near water (in Rome, see Stambaugh, *City*, 152). Odor rather than impurity was the main problem; cf. I. W. Oliver, "Simon Peter Meets Simon the Tanner: The Ritual Insignificance of Tanning in Ancient Judaism," *NTS* 59 (1, 2013): 50–60.

ruled that a tanner must grant his wife a divorce if she could not endure it (*m. Ketub. 7:10*).

Members of most trades, including tanners, worked from their homes. Tanners produced the sort of leather (cf. 18:3) useful for shoes. One might have expected Peter, staying near the sea (10:6, 32), to have lodged with a fisherman (cf. Luke 5:2–3); fishermen in Joppa had something of a kinship organization there.¹⁰⁵⁵ But Jesus instructed his followers to stay wherever they were offered hospitality (Luke 9:4; 10:5–8); perhaps like Jesus, Peter sometimes had nowhere else to lay his head (9:57–58).¹⁰⁵⁶ Perhaps it also helps prepare Peter for crossing more dramatic barriers of purity in Acts 10:14–15, 28.

10:1–8: A ROMAN OFFICER'S VISION

In 10:1–11:18, a Roman officer is welcomed into God's people without being circumcised first (i.e., without converting to ethnic Judaism in the way prescribed by law and tradition). The importance of this account for Luke's larger story is clear from the fact that it, like Paul's conversion narrative (9:1–18; 22:3–21; 26:9–18) is repeated three times (10:1–48; 11:5–16; 15:7–11).¹⁰⁵⁷

The narrative continues to move forward toward the gentile mission. Although another gentile convert preceded him (8:26–39),¹⁰⁵⁸ Cornelius was surely less literate in Scripture than that official (8:30; cf. 10:25). Further, whereas Jews had little reason to resent Nubians (8:27–39), they had considerable cause for offense at Romans,¹⁰⁵⁹ yet Cornelius foreshadows where Luke's narrative is moving (28:16–31).¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁵ S. Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," 631–700 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 685 n. 5 (citing *CIJ* 2.945).

¹⁰⁵⁶ The gate (Acts 10:17) suggests a house of means (12:13).

¹⁰⁵⁷ For the deliberate literary artistry, see R. D. Witherup, "Cornelius over and over and over again: 'Functional Redundancy' in the Acts of the Apostles," *JSNT* 49 (1993): 45–66.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Some scholars suggest also those in 11:19–21, since Luke's narration in geographic blocks (like some other historians) could chronologically displace that Antioch material (cf. 8:4). Full proselytes (gentiles who had first become Jewish) were already accepted even in leadership as early as 6:5.

¹⁰⁵⁹ For Judeans, a Roman centurion, like a tax-collector, is an extreme example: if tax-collectors can be saved (e.g., Luke 5:27, 29; 7:29, 34; 15:1; 18:13; 19:2; linked with soldiers in Luke 3:12–14), or if Roman soldiers can be saved, then anyone can be saved (for the principle, cf. 1 Tim 1:15–16).

¹⁰⁶⁰ His function thus parallels that of the centurion in Luke 7:2–10: a positive and God-fearing (cf. Luke 7:4–5) gentile "exception" who serves as a harbinger for future exceptions. Luke's favorable portrayal of the Roman military (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.306–9) may also reinforce his apologetic objective, equipping Christians to establish

More importantly, the African official's conversion did not directly impact the Jerusalem church (cf. 8:40), which probably remained unaware of it. Only in this extended section does God lead first Peter (10:46–47) and then the Jerusalem church (11:18) to officially recognize that God has brought an uncircumcised gentile into his covenant people.¹⁰⁶¹ For Luke, apostolic ratification confirms the continuity between Jerusalem (and the church's Jewish heritage stressed in the Gospel) and the gentile mission (stressed in Acts). Philip was not one of the Twelve and did not eat with the eunuch, nor did the official live in the holy land (hence risk further contact with Judean believers).¹⁰⁶² The conversion of Cornelius, by contrast, could establish a precedent, one that many of Peter's colleagues would consider dangerous. It seems quickly neglected as an exception to the standard paradigm¹⁰⁶³ – until subsequent events require its service as a precedent (15:7–11).

God confirms this plan through paired visions (10:1–8; 10:9–16; cf. similarly 9:1–19); through the Spirit's leading (10:19–20; 11:12; cf. 8:29); and most decisively through endowing the gentiles with his promised Spirit (10:44–48; 11:15–17; cf. 2:39; Gal 3:14). These signs confirm that it was the very God who had once sealed his covenant with circumcision who now had adopted¹⁰⁶⁴ these uncircumcised seekers into his covenant. If God had accepted them, his people dare not count them unclean (10:15, 28; 11:9; 15:9).

In Luke's narrative, the apostles already appear to know something of a gentile mission (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 3:25–26),¹⁰⁶⁵ but it is hardly their

that they offer no threat to Rome, an issue important in the years leading up to and following 70 CE.

¹⁰⁶¹ For the "conversion" of Peter or the church here, see, e.g., González, *Acts*, 136. F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 61, speaks of this narrative's "paradigmatic significance" as the (official) "origin of the Gentile mission."

¹⁰⁶² Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 359; Spencer, *Philip*, 86–87.

¹⁰⁶³ Even after the Jerusalem Council, many Jerusalemite believers, whom Peter wished to avoid scandalizing, proved resistant (Gal 2:12).

¹⁰⁶⁴ "Welcomed" or "embraced," while accurate, do not capture the sense of divine initiative as well as Pauline images like "adopted" or "grafted" here.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Whatever may be said of Acts 1:8, it is difficult to restrict Luke 24:47 to Diaspora Judaism. Historically Luke is likely right about this: it is so pervasive in our sources as to have good claim to being primitive (Matt 24:14; 28:19; Mk 13:10; 16:15; Rom 15:8–9; cf. Rom 1:5; 11:11–13; Col 1:23); it is Luke, in fact, who reports the most resistance to the idea (though cf. Matt 10:5–6; 15:24), resistance that, in view of his largely favorable view of the Twelve, he would not likely have invented. Peter's resistance to gentile mission may

current focus. They may want the message to prevail fully in Jewish areas of Judea, Galilee, and (since 8:5–25) Samaria (9:31) before moving forward. Just as table-fellowship with marginalized groups within Israel was an issue in the Gospel (Luke 5:29–30; 15:2), table-fellowship between Jew and gentile becomes a central question in this story (Acts 11:3) and in the momentous decision (for which it serves as a precedent, 15:7–9, 14) in 15:20.¹⁰⁶⁶

The narrative in 10:1–43 alternates between material discussing Cornelius (10:1–8, 17–18, 22, 24b–25, 30–33) and Peter (10:9–16, 19–21, 23–24a, 26–29, 34–43). Yet God, rather than Peter, is clearly the initiator here (10:13–20, 28, 44–47), as Peter is later more than happy to emphasize to his detractors (11:7–12, 17).¹⁰⁶⁷ Indeed, despite Peter's earlier centrality, his primary function at this climactic point in the narrative is to introduce the gentile mission, and in 15:7–11 to confirm it. After this, Luke's attention turns quickly to Paul.¹⁰⁶⁸

A Closer Look: Caesarea and Soldiers

Luke (or, on other views, his source) likely spent more than a year in Caesarea (21:8–10; 23:33–27:1), hence would have known the stories of local believers there. Herod the Great had refounded the small harbor at Strato's Tower as a hellenistic city, renaming it in honor of the emperor and constructing a massive artificial harbor.¹⁰⁶⁹ Next to Jerusalem, it was Judea's largest city (Philostratus, *Ep. Apoll.* 11), and the Roman prefect of Judea resided in Herod's old palace there between 6 and 41 CE, and after 44.

By this period gentiles dominated the city (Josephus, *War* 3.409), the patron deity of which was the goddess Fortune. Although Jewish inhabitants controlled more of the city's wealth and claimed that Herod, its builder, was a Jew (*War* 2.268; *Ant.* 20.175–77), the Syrian "Greeks" who

resemble Jonah, also connected with Joppa (Jon 1:3), along with Ezekiel (see Acts 10:14–15).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Cf. discussion in Blue, "Influence," 490–94; Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 172–73.

¹⁰⁶⁷ With Gaventa, *Acts*, 173. Luke would not invent Peter's reluctance (cf. even later, Gal 2:12–13), but he can use it to show that an act of God rather than human predispositions produced the church's embrace of the gentile mission.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Dupont, *Salvation*, 24.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.293, 332–40. On Caesarea, see further J. E. Taylor, "Paul's Caesarea," pages 42–67 in *The Urban World and the First Christians* (ed. S. Walton, P. R. Trebilco, and D. W. J. Gill; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

lived there argued that its statues and temples indicated that it was designed for Greeks (*War* 2.266). Although some gentiles there converted, ethnic tensions were high. In times of conflict the Roman auxiliaries, who were mainly Syrian, would side with local Syrians against Jewish residents (*War* 2.267–68). Josephus estimates that in 66 CE, Syrians in Caesarea massacred twenty thousand Jews in a single hour (*War* 2.457).

During most periods, Judea's prefect had one cohort in Jerusalem and five in Caesarea (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.365; *War* 2.224; 3.66); most of those in Caesarea were Syrian (*War* 2.268). Some doubt the presence of gentile soldiers in Caesarea during Agrippa's reign.¹⁰⁷⁰ Whether Agrippa was already in Judea yet (as in Acts 12:1), however, is debatable. Moreover, Josephus shows that gentile soldiers *did* live in Caesarea even during his reign, and were deeply attached to the locality.¹⁰⁷¹ Retired soldiers often settled near their last camp;¹⁰⁷² retirement could explain Cornelius's Roman name,¹⁰⁷³ although the soldier in 10:7 renders this less likely.¹⁰⁷⁴

Although surviving information from antiquity is quite limited, commentators could be correct in identifying *the Italian cohort* (10:1) with the *Cohors II Miliaria Italica Civium Romanorum Voluntariorum (quae est in Syria)*, apparently an auxiliary unit of archers (*ILS* 3.2.9168; cf. *CIL* 11.6117).¹⁰⁷⁵ This was not the only "Italian cohort,"¹⁰⁷⁶ and even a cohort originally consisting of Italians could by this period be filled with Syrian recruits. But it at least signals for Luke's audience the narrative's direction. ****

¹⁰⁷⁰ Haenchen, *Acts*, 360.

¹⁰⁷¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 19.356–65; C. S. Keener, "Acts 10: Were Troops Stationed in Caesarea during Agrippa's Rule?" *JGRCJ* 7 (2010): 164–76. On soldiers attached to localities, see J. B. Campbell, *The Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 337: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1994), 120–21, 140–41, 212.

¹⁰⁷² G. L. Thompson, "Roman Military," *DNTB* 991–95 (994); J. B. Campbell, *Army*, 212.

¹⁰⁷³ Auxiliary soldiers received citizenship on discharge after two decades of service (though centurions often chose not to retire); but Cornelius could also be a Roman officer lent from the Syrian legion.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Though cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 503–4, who suggests that Cornelius retained privately a retired soldier's services.

¹⁰⁷⁵ E.g., Haenchen, *Acts*, 346; Barrett, *Acts*, 499; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 449. Attestation in 69 CE is quite close in time considering limitations in extant evidence.

¹⁰⁷⁶ I. Levinskaya, "The Italian Cohort in Acts 10:1," pages 106–25 in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting* (ed. P. J. Williams et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 107–8; cf. also multiple Italian legions.

Given Cornelius’s name,¹⁰⁷⁷ he was probably a Roman citizen before being assigned to a Syrian auxiliary cohort in Caesarea; “many auxiliary centurions were citizen legionaries promoted to the position.”¹⁰⁷⁸ In any case, Rome’s authority stood behind him (cf. Luke 7:8), and he would represent Rome for Luke’s audience.

Centurions commanded sixty to eighty men. Whereas tribunes (Acts 21:31) normally achieved their rank through equestrian status, many centurions worked their way up through the ranks, usually as the most consistent soldiers (Polybius 6.24.1, 9). Although this is not a healing story, as in Luke 7:1–10, Luke parallels Cornelius with the centurion there as a “good,” i.e., God-fearing gentile:

Luke 7:1–10	Acts 10
Supplicant is centurion (7:6)	Supplicant is centurion (10:22)
Pious regarding Jewish law (7:3–5)	Pious regarding Jewish law (10:2)
A recognized barrier between Jew and gentile (7:6–7)	A recognized barrier between Jew and gentile (10:28)
Man of God willing to come to him (7:6)	Man of God willing to come to him (10:23, 29, 33)
Intermediaries praise centurion (7:3, 6)	Messengers praise centurion (7:3, 6)

Cornelius was *devout* and *feared God* (10:2). These expressions have a range of uses, but Luke often applies them to gentile sympathizers who were not yet full converts to Judaism (10:22; 13:16, 26, 43; 17:4, 17).¹⁰⁷⁹ Inscriptions attest the diverse religious interests of soldiers throughout the empire, although worship of the emperor pervaded communal military life.¹⁰⁸⁰

¹⁰⁷⁷ Surely not Luke’s invention; where we can most firmly test Luke against another source, he does not add a centurion’s name (Matt 8:5; Mark 15:39; Luke 7:2; 23:47).

¹⁰⁷⁸ J. B. Campbell, personal correspondence, June 19, 2006; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.77.1. Josephus also knows of centurions in Judea with Roman names (e.g., *War* 2.298; cf. Acts 27:1). Since equestrians also could enter the army as centurions (P. Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History* [New York: Oxford, 2007], 130), it is no surprise that some citizens entered auxiliary units (143).

¹⁰⁷⁹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.195. Objections to this category by a minority of scholars in the 1980s were roundly refuted by other scholars and subsequent epigraphic discoveries of even Luke’s nomenclature, especially at Aphrodisias. Such sympathizers were common (cf., e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.41; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.9.20) and their children often became full converts (Juvenal, *Sat.* 5.14.96–106).

¹⁰⁸⁰ J. B. Campbell, *Army*, 127. For primary sources covering soldiers’ religion, see J. B. Campbell, *Army*, 127–36.

Cornelius's *household* likewise feared God (10:2). Luke emphasizes households as a basis for reaching communities (Luke 10:5; Acts 16:15) and households coming to faith (Acts 16:15, 31–34; 18:8). Usually families shared the religion of the head of the household (e.g., Plutarch, *Bride* 19, *Mor.* 140D). At least legionary soldiers, however, could not legally marry during their minimally two decades of military service, often from roughly ages seventeen to thirty-seven. Nevertheless, it was common knowledge that soldiers often had local concubines, relationships often ratified upon discharge.¹⁰⁸¹ Whatever Cornelius's marital status, he surely had servants (Acts 10:7).¹⁰⁸² Although Romans normally lived in nuclear households, their definition of *familia* could include slaves (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 9.36.4).

That the revelations come during worship (10:2–3, 9)¹⁰⁸³ imply that they are divine; that God takes note of prayers and charity (10:4; cf. 9:36) fits Luke's theology (Luke 11:41; 21:3; cf. earlier Tob 12:12–13). Cornelius's *terror* (10:4) at a revelation is not surprising (cf. Luke 1:12; 24:5, 37; Dan 7:15); neither is his question (Zech 1:9, 19; 4:4–5; 5:6; 6:4). Like Saul in 9:6, Cornelius in 10:5–6 is advised to obtain further instructions from a human agent, preserving the usual pattern of the gospel's propagation (1:8).

10:9–16: NO LONGER UNCLEAR: PETER'S VISION

Just as Ananias and Paul received complementary visions (9:3–6, 10–16; esp. 9:12), so do Peter and Cornelius (10:3–6, 10–16). That the two events that Luke repeats three times in Acts each involve such complementary visions underlines his view of their importance for salvation history.

Peter's vision emphasizes that gentiles whom God has accepted are no longer unclean. Through paired visions (10:9–16, 22) and the Spirit's voice (10:19–20; 11:12) God convinces Peter to be his agent to Cornelius.

Luke's narrative recalls OT commissioning accounts,¹⁰⁸⁴ including the frequent OT pattern of protesting one's call or commission (Exod 3:11–4:13;

¹⁰⁸¹ E.g., BGU 140.10–33; *ILS* 1986; *CIL* 16.1, 42; cf. Southern, *Army*, 144.

¹⁰⁸² Although common soldiers, paid as little as 225 denarii a year (100 for auxiliaries), could barely afford the cheapest slave, citizen centurions earned, at minimum, 3,750 denarii a year. Slaves generally ranged in price from around 187.5 denarii to as high as 175,000 denarii. For centurions with servants or freedpersons, cf. Luke 7:2; *CIL* 13.8648; *ILS* 2244; for servants with the army, e.g., Southern, *Army*, 224–25.

¹⁰⁸³ Three o'clock was a regular prayer time (3:1); see explicitly 10:30. For angels at another prayer time, cf. Luke 1:10–11.

¹⁰⁸⁴ See here esp. B. J. Hubbard, "The Role of Commissioning Accounts in Acts," pages 187–98 in Talbert, *Perspectives*, 188–89.

Judg 6:15; Jer 1:6; cf. Isa 6:5). Peter's protest against eating unclean food in 10:14 especially echoes that of Ezekiel in Ezek 4:14.¹⁰⁸⁵ That God commissions Peter, whose primary focus is Israel (cf. Gal 2:7–8), to break ground with gentiles here fits Luke's theme of underlining the continuity between the Jewish and gentile missions (cf. Acts 9:15).

Learning that gentiles are not all unclean (10:28, 34–35; 15:9) makes possible mission to the gentiles.¹⁰⁸⁶ Even in Lev 11, the purpose of the kashrut was at least partly to separate Israel from the nations (Lev 11:44–45).¹⁰⁸⁷ Gentiles regularly complained about Jews' unwillingness to eat with gentiles, a primary reason for which was desire to avoid unclean food.¹⁰⁸⁸ Their subsequent table fellowship (cf. 10:23a, 48b; 11:3) revisits Jesus eating with sinners in the Gospel, just as the church's hostile response (11:3) reflects that of the Pharisees in the Gospel (Luke 5:30; 15:2).

Normally those traveling at noon (10:9) considered their mission urgent, as was departure after three p.m. (10:3). Only a vigorous pace and possibly some unusual travel after dark (cf. 23:31; Luke 24:29) would allow Cornelius's messengers to cover the 30 some miles from Caesarea to Joppa in the twenty-one intervening hours.¹⁰⁸⁹ Earlier instructions (10:6), odor (Acts 9:43) and specific directions (10:17) brought them quickly to Simon's house.

Meanwhile, Peter's providentially timed vision is no secret night dream (cf. 26:26); a rooftop was a public location (Luke 12:3). Rather than being a fixed prayer time (as in 3:1), noon was a time for rest¹⁰⁹⁰ and sometimes eating (Acts 10:10).¹⁰⁹¹ Peter, however, prays beyond the regular times (6:4), following Jesus's model of private prayer (Luke 4:42; 6:12; 9:28; 22:41). (Judean homes' flat rooftops, usually accessed by an outside stairway,

¹⁰⁸⁵ In that text, unlike here, God makes a concession (Ezek 4:15).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Tannehill, *Acts*, 134–37.

¹⁰⁸⁷ See Mary Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus," pages 202–5 in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach* (ed. W. A. Lessa and E. Z. Vogt; 3rd ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 202–3; deSilva, *Honor*, 260–62, 264, 273, and esp. 280.

¹⁰⁸⁸ J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (NovTSup 41; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 139, cites Diodorus Siculus 34.1; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.258; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.33; M. Junianus Justinus 36.2; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5. Cf. also Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.239; *Jos. Asen.* 7:1.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Unless Luke condenses a departure a day after Cornelius's vision (10:8), allowing a usual pace (as in 10:23–24), making sense of *four days* in 10:30.

¹⁰⁹⁰ E.g., Polybius 9.17.3; Silius Italicus 13.637–38; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 21; Plutarch, *Themist.* 30.1; 2 Sam 4:5.

¹⁰⁹¹ E.g., Suetonius, *Claud.* 34.2; Alciphron, *Paras.* 1 (Trechedeipnus to Lopadecthambus), 3.4. ¶1.

served various purposes, but were often more private and better ventilated than inside.) Peter's *trance* (10:10; 11:5; cf. 22:17) exemplifies 2:17 and might evoke earlier biblical experiences (e.g., Gen 15:12), as does *the heaven opened* (Acts 10:11; cf. 7:56; Luke 3:21; Ezek 1:1; cf. 2 Bar. 22:1).

While others prepare Peter's midday meal (10:10),¹⁰⁹² God offers him food from heaven – that is less ritually pure. Peter sees a sheet let down from heaven; its mixing of *all kinds of* animals (hence probably both clean and unclean) renders all of them unclean (Acts 10:11–12).¹⁰⁹³ Although the heavenly voice (10:13; cf. 9:4; Luke 3:22; 9:35) orders hungry Peter to slaughter and consume the food God has provided, Peter objects (Acts 10:14; cf. 9:13–14). Like Ezekiel (Ezek 4:12–14), Peter objects based on biblical purity rules. Scripture and Jewish tradition rejected *profane* foods,¹⁰⁹⁴ and tradition preferred death to eating them (1 Macc 1:62).

God's voice corrects Peter: God is able to make the unclean clean (10:15); triple repetition (10:16) underlines the point. By eliminating the intrinsic impurity of gentile foods,¹⁰⁹⁵ God removes the barrier to table fellowship with gentiles (cf. 11:3). God's agenda is not a change in Peter's regular diet, but God cleansing unclean gentiles (10:28; 15:9).

10:17–33: APOSTLE AND OCCUPIER MEET

By divine arrangement, the apostle meets the representative of Rome – from a typical Judean or Galilean perspective, a representative of the occupying power. Surmounting his view that gentiles are unclean, Peter values hospitality over purity.

Luke devotes nearly as much space to Peter meeting and providing lodging for Cornelius's agents (10:17–23) as to Cornelius's (10:1–8) or Peter's (10:9–16) visions. He thereby shows Peter's understanding of and obedience to the vision. Perplexity after divine activity (10:17) is not unusual (cf. Acts 2:12; 5:24; Luke 1:12, 29; 9:7), but the Spirit, the director of the gentile mission (Acts 1:8), initiates the vision's interpretation (10:19; cf. 8:29). Though sent by Cornelius (10:8, 33), the messengers were

¹⁰⁹² Possibly at a shared oven in the outdoor courtyard.

¹⁰⁹³ Animals were common in apocalyptic visions (e.g., Dan 7:3–8; 1 En. 89–90; 4 Ezra 11:39–40).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Lev 11:1–47; Deut 14:3–21; cf. Dan 1:8–16; Josephus, *Life* 14. Their culinary separatism was widely known (3 Macc 3:3–7; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.22.4; Plutarch, *T.-T.* 4.4.4, *Mor.* 669C; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.160).

¹⁰⁹⁵ Cf. Mark 7:18–19; Rom 14:2–3; Col 2:21–22; 1 Tim 4:3; Heb 13:9.

ultimately sent by God (10:5; cf. 1 Sam 9:16). The messengers' praise of Cornelius as *well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation* (10:22) either envisions Caesarean Jews alone or is epideictic hyperbole – otherwise Peter would already know of Cornelius!

Normal hospitality includes overnight *lodging* and meals (10:23), although strict Judeans would object to such hospitality for, and especially eating with, impure gentiles.¹⁰⁹⁶ The food should now be ready (10:10), and one could not eat without offering guests food – especially after God's lesson about what was clean at table (10:15, 17). If Peter could accompany messengers in a case of corpse uncleanness (Acts 9:38–39), he can do the same for gentiles. Peter might recall Jesus's willingness to enter the home of another "good" centurion – though Peter must now do what Jesus did not have to (Luke 7:1–10).

Just as Peter and his hosts, directed by Peter's vision and Spirit-led interpretation, welcomes the gentile messengers in 10:17–23, so in 10:24–33 Cornelius, earlier directed by a vision, welcomes the Jewish delegation. We might view Peter as something like an ambassador for Israel's God (cf. 2 Cor 5:20; Eph 6:20). What Roman policy failed to achieve in ethnically divided Caesarea, God could achieve in the church: the reconciling of normally hostile peoples. The visions and other confirmations in the narrative, however, reveal that even for those already saved by God's grace themselves, such reconciliation initially required divine intervention.

Cornelius has gathered relatives from outside his nuclear family (suggesting that he or in-laws hail from the area; 10:24), awaiting Peter's coming. That Cornelius venerates Peter (10:25) reminds us that Cornelius is a God-fearer but not a proselyte; indeed, active members of the military had to venerate Caesar. Peter rightly rejects such veneration (10:26; cf. 3:12; 14:15), which only Jesus may rightly accept (Luke 8:41; 17:16; 24:52).¹⁰⁹⁷ This contrasts with the behavior of his persecutor later in the same city (Acts 12:19–23).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Cf. Esth 14:17 LXX; Tob 1:10–13; Jdt 10:5; 12:2, 9, 19; *Jub.* 22:16; *m. Tehar.* 7:6; *Abod. Zar.* 5:5; *t. Abod. Zar.* 2:8; 4:6; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 274.

¹⁰⁹⁷ The appropriate human response to such veneration (cf. Dan 2:46) was to refuse it (Homer, *Od.* 16.186–89; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.129–31), but the line between gestures of veneration and supplication (cf. Homer, *Il.* 1.427; Livy 45.7.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.81) was sometimes ambiguous (cf. 2 Kgs 5:18–19).

Peter had considered it impure to associate with gentiles (10:28);¹⁰⁹⁸ this reflects strict Judean tradition,¹⁰⁹⁹ especially against eating together.¹¹⁰⁰ If Pharisees limited their intercourse with the *amme ha'arets* within Israel,¹¹⁰¹ certainly at least Pharisees (who came to constitute a conservative wing within the Jerusalem church, 15:5) would be no less concerned with gentiles.¹¹⁰² Peter cannot judge anyone impure based on their ethnicity; God can cleanse and thus save anyone through faith (15:9–11). Peter thus raised no objection to the messengers (10:29), his earlier objections to God (10:14; 11:8) already answered (10:15–20; 11:9–12).

In 10:30–32, Cornelius recounts in somewhat different words the events of 10:3–6 (also recounted in 10:22), preparing for Peter's message. Ironically for Luke's hearers, the wording of the angel's message to a gentile in 10:31 (*your prayer has been heard*) may echo the angelic message to a priest in Luke 1:13.¹¹⁰³

10:34–43: PETER RECOUNTS JESUS'S STORY

Peter recounts here the nucleus of Jesus's story, starting from John's baptism, the same story preached at greater length by Luke's Gospel.¹¹⁰⁴ (For example, God "anointing" Jesus with the Spirit in 10:38 evokes the Gospel's programmatic statement in Luke 4:18.) Although omitting explicit quotations for his gentile audience, various allusions in Peter's message (esp. Deut 10:17 in Acts 10:34; Isa 52:7 LXX in Acts 10:36) evoke the larger biblical metanarrative.

¹⁰⁹⁸ In Greek, Peter's *associate* recalls *join* in 8:29; Luke's audience already knows that the Spirit allows such association.

¹⁰⁹⁹ In general, cf. 4Q394 f3–7.1.8–11; *Let. Aris.* 138–42; Philo, *Mos.* 1.278; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.285; 15.417; *War* 1.229; 6.124–25; *Ag. Ap.* 2.257–59; *m. Tehar.* 7:6; *Pesah.* 8:8; *Ohal.* 18:7; *Seqal.* 8:1; Le Cornu, *Acts*, 574–78 (cf. God fearers on 583).

¹¹⁰⁰ See again *Jub.* 22:16; *Esth* 14:17 LXX; 3 Macc 3:4–7; *Jdt* 10:5; 12:2, 9, 19; *Tob* 1:10–13; *Let. Aris.* 142; *Jos. Asen.* 7:1. Some even treated Samaritan foods as like pork (*m. Seb.* 8:10).

¹¹⁰¹ For the contrast, see, e.g., *m. Abot* 3:10/11; *Git.* 5:9; *Hag.* 2:7; *t. Demai* 2:5, 14–15, 19; 3:6–7; 6:8; *Ma'as.* 2:5. Their food was untithed (*t. Demai* 3:6–7), and scrupulous Pharisees deemed them agents of impurity (*m. Demai* 2:2; 3:10; 6:8; *Ma'as.* S. 3:3; *Hag.* 2:7; *Tehar.* 4:5; 8:3; 5; *t. Ahilot* 5:11).

¹¹⁰² Later rabbis could allow eating with gentiles given proper precautions (*m. Abod. Zar.* 4:9–5:10), but this was apparently not a factor in the Jerusalem church.

¹¹⁰³ Luke also presents 10:33 in his own idiom (cf. *all of us are here* with Acts 16:28).

¹¹⁰⁴ Its summary form also provides an interpretive crux for the Gospel of Luke, recounting key themes central to his emphasis; on speeches interpreting history and so forth, see, e.g., E. Plümacher, "Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte und Dionys von Halikarnass," *NTS* 39 (2, 1993): 161–77.

Luke portrays some key events of the Jesus story as common knowledge in Judea (Luke 24:18; Acts 10:37–38; 26:26). But Peter himself has now discovered something he had not known (10:34–35). Jewish tradition commonly affirmed God's impartiality (10:34),¹¹⁰⁵ but in much of Judea the application in 10:35 would have been more controversial: God welcomes upright gentiles.¹¹⁰⁶ (Most Jews acknowledged some righteous gentiles who could be saved, but the strictest minority of Judeans required circumcision even for this.)¹¹⁰⁷ In 10:35, *fears him* recalls Cornelius's status in 10:2, 22, and *does what is right* recalls Cornelius as *upright* in 10:22.

In 10:36–38, Peter turns to public information that he supposes known to Cornelius.¹¹⁰⁸ *Preaching peace* (10:36) evokes identical wording in the Greek translation of Isa 52:7, which also speaks of the good news about salvation and God's reign, or kingdom (cf. Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 8:12).¹¹⁰⁹ In contrast to the alleged peace of the empire established by Augustus and the Roman military,¹¹¹⁰ God was offering humanity terms of true peace through Jesus Christ (Luke 2:14; 10:5–6; 19:38). For a Roman officer, Caesar might appear *Lord of all* (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.12), but this is a title that most Jews applied exclusively to YHWH.¹¹¹¹

Like Mark,¹¹¹² Luke's introduction (Luke 1:5–80) and body (3:1–20), and Acts 1:22 and 13:24–25 (and exegetically perhaps Isa 40:3), Peter begins the gospel narrative in Acts 10:37 with John the Baptist, the preparer.¹¹¹³

¹¹⁰⁵ Deut 10:17; 2 Chron 19:7; Job 34:19; Sir 35:12 [NRSV 35:15]; *Jub.* 5:16; 21:4; 33:18; *Ps. Sol.* 2:18; Wis 6:7; 2 Bar. 13:8; 44:4; *Sipre Num.* 42.1.2; Rom 2:11. See further J. M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* (SBLDS 59; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 7–119. Cf. also Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 403–4.

¹¹⁰⁶ Other Jews could speak of God's favor toward virtuous Romans (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.282, 305–9). For Peter, they are welcome to be saved/cleansed through faith in Christ (11:14; 15:9).

¹¹⁰⁷ Cf. Acts 15:1. For the range of views, see esp. Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 52–69.

¹¹⁰⁸ Appeals to common knowledge (e.g., also 26:26; Luke 24:18) was common in rhetorical argumentation; e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* pref. 1421a.4–6; Isaeus, *Pyrr.* 40; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 22; Phil 4:15; 1 Thess 2:1, 10; 3:3; 5:2.

¹¹⁰⁹ In Greek, *message he sent* possibly evokes Ps 107:20 (LXX 106:20); 147:18 (LXX 147:7).

¹¹¹⁰ Rome could treat subjugation as pacification (*Res Gestae* 5.26; Cicero, *Prov. Cons.* 12.31; Velleius Paterculus 2.90.1–4; 2.91.1; 2.115.4); ultimately God himself would subject all enemies, those who reject his peace now (cf. Acts 2:35; Luke 20:43).

¹¹¹¹ E.g., Josh 3:11–13; Mic 4:13; Zech 4:14; 6:5; Wis 6:7; *Let. Aris.* 18; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.20; Philo, *Creation* 100.

¹¹¹² The possibly Petrine Gospel, but note also John 1:19–34.

¹¹¹³ One should begin a narrative with the most natural starting-point (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 10–12). Cf. also *beginning from Galilee* (Acts 10:37; Luke 23:5), which to Cornelius could sound like a cultural backwater.

The Spirit anointing¹¹¹⁴ Jesus to heal the sick and release the oppressed (10:38) recalls Jesus's inaugural Lukan sermon (Luke 4:18), applying the liberation to physical healing and deliverance from demons (e.g., 13:12, 15–16).¹¹¹⁵ Jesus's *doing good* is the popular and widespread ancient language of benefaction, used for caring for public need (cf. Acts 4:9).¹¹¹⁶ Everyone viewed as horrific killing a benefactor (10:39).

After noting shared information in 10:36–38, Peter turns to information verified by present witnesses (10:39–42; cf. 1:8, 21–22) as well as the past witness of the prophets (10:43). In rhetorical terms, this paragraph may continue the narrative introduction and/or function as proofs. *Judea* in 10:39 functions as greater Judea – the entire Jewish homeland's countryside, including Galilee (as in, e.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 5.15.70). Jesus's death *on a tree* (10:39; Deut 21:22–23) implies Roman involvement that is not prudent to state more explicitly here, though the Greek grammar also implies Judean involvement (cf. 2:23; 3:14–15; 5:28; 7:52; 13:27–28). Ancients could understand selective visibility,¹¹¹⁷ in this case to those commissioned to spread the word to others (10:42; cf. Luke 24:16, 31; John 14:21–23). *Chosen* recalls Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2; *witnesses*, Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8;¹¹¹⁸ *ate and drank*, Luke 24:42–43.

Ironically, though, Peter, preaching here to gentiles, does not yet grasp the enormity of what is taking place. He acknowledges only Jesus's command *to preach to the people* (10:42), a familiar Lukan expression for Israel, even though Jesus explicitly commanded preaching to all peoples (Luke 24:47)! Nevertheless, Jesus will judge all (Acts 10:42; cf. 2 Tim 4:1, 8; 1 Pet 4:5), a divine role (Luke 6:37; Acts 17:31), and forgiveness is for *everyone who believes in him* (10:43; cf. Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11; 10:4, 11–13).¹¹¹⁹

¹¹¹⁴ The idea is Jewish, not hellenistic (1 Sam 10:1–10; 16:13; Isa 61:1; 1QM 11.7–8; CD 2.12; 6.1; 4Q270 f2.2.14; 11Q13 2.18).

¹¹¹⁵ Although Satan caused some physical infirmity (Job 1–2), God could cause it directly in other cases (Luke 1:20–22; Acts 9:8; 13:11), and could heal either (9:18).

¹¹¹⁶ See more fully F. W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Greco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton, 1982).

¹¹¹⁷ Homer, *Il.* 1.194–200; Num 22:23, 27–28; 2 Kgs 6:16–17; 3 Macc 6:18.

¹¹¹⁸ The complete pool of witnesses extends beyond the Twelve (Luke 24:13–35; Acts 1:21–26; Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 25).

¹¹¹⁹ Although he preaches repentance to heirs of the covenant (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; cf. 13:24; 19:4) and faith to gentiles, these responses substantially cohere (11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20).

10:44–48: THE SPIRIT CONFIRMS THE GENTILES' ACCEPTANCE

The climactic message of forgiveness for *whoever* believes (10:43) is confirmed by the outpouring of the Spirit on gentiles (10:44–48).¹¹²⁰ The language of “pouring” (10:45) evokes the quotation of Joel 2:28–29 in Acts 2:17–18 (using a cognate term), indicating that Joel’s “all flesh” includes gentile believers as well as Jewish ones. Although hearers often interrupt speeches in Acts (e.g., 22:22; 26:24),¹¹²¹ God’s Spirit, who sent both Peter (10:19) and Cornelius’s messengers (10:20), interrupts here.¹¹²² The Spirit unexpectedly comes without laying on of hands (8:17) or even baptism (2:38), but most unexpectedly by falling on uncircumcised gentiles. The Spirit is a *gift* (10:45; cf. 2:38; 8:20; 11:12).

In 10:44–48, the Spirit graphically confirms the gentiles’ acceptance.¹¹²³ Peter has accepted the more moderate Jewish position that some gentiles can be righteous (10:35), but only when the Spirit falls (10:45) does he recognize that God has made his hearers members of the covenant people, like full proselytes.¹¹²⁴ The Spirit was a gift promised only for the covenant people (cf. e.g., Isa 42:1; 44:3; Ezek 36:26–27; 37:14, 29; Joel 2:28–29); that gentiles received it without circumcision indicated that God had accepted them into the covenant by their faith alone, without the outward covenant sign of circumcision (or even baptism). God would hardly pour his Spirit (10:45) into vessels he had not already purified or cleansed (cf. 10:28; 15:9).

¹¹²⁰ Neither Luke nor 1 Peter (1:11; 4:14) strictly follow the supposed distinction between the NT Spirit being “in” (often Paul, following Ezek 36:27) and the OT Spirit being “upon” people; “in” reflects more common Greek anthropology whereas “upon” reflects more Hebrew idiom. Nevertheless, Luke generally prefers “upon” (Luke 1:35; 2:25; 4:18; Acts 1:8; 2:17; 10:44–45; 11:15; 19:6), reflecting OT idiom for *empowerment* to prophesy (Num 11:17, 25–26, 29; 24:2; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23; 1 Chron 12:18; 2 Chron 20:14; probably 2 Kgs 2:9; Is 59:21; 61:1; Ezek 11:5; 37:1), to lead (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam 16:13), or to exhibit superhuman strength (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 11:6).

¹¹²¹ Especially after narrative introductions; Luke naturally specializes in narrative. In terms of Greek rhetorical structure (which one might not expect Peter to follow), 10:36 might be the *propositio* (thesis statement), 10:37–42 the *narratio*, and 10:43 the beginning of proofs.

¹¹²² Interruptions also characterized common rhetorical settings; e.g., Caesar, C.W. 2.33; Livy 3.40.5; comment on Acts 2:13.

¹¹²³ For the Spirit as certain evidence of conversion, see 1 Cor 2:4; Gal 3:2, 5; as a sign of gentile believers’ covenant status, see Gal 3:14; cf. Rom 15:16.

¹¹²⁴ The controversy in 11:3 is not that Peter failed to circumcise gentiles, but that he ate with them as *if* they were circumcised.

When uncircumcised gentiles receive the same gift of the Spirit that the original disciples had received, and with the same evidence (*for they heard them speaking in tongues*, 10:46; cf. 2:4),¹¹²⁵ Peter orders their baptism into the covenant community without further ado. As circumcision signified the covenant, water baptism pointed to the greater baptism in the Spirit (1:5; 11:16; Luke 3:16); the full experience of the new covenant thus renders circumcision spiritually superfluous and water baptism's appropriateness perfunctory (cf. Acts 18:25–26). Although they undoubtedly expected water baptism first (Acts 2:38), they found that God was more interested in the reality than the sequence. Peter's climactic question as to who can "hinder" (NRSV *withhold*) their baptism (10:47; cf. 8:36) anticipates the climactic question in 11:17: "Who was I to hinder God. . ."

The Spirit that signals empowerment to witness to the nations (1:8) has now fallen even on those "afar off" (2:39) themselves. This implies that these gentiles are now equipped spiritually to propagate the message further.¹¹²⁶

Like Lydia later (16:15), Cornelius prevailed on the preachers to accept his hospitality, allowing him the honor of serving as host. While a God-fearer would know better than to serve Jewish guests pork, his home was presumably not free from gentile impurity (cf. 10:25). Eating within this home (10:48) would prove controversial (11:3), but Jesus had said to welcome a household's hospitality without questioning (Luke 10:7–8; cf. 1 Cor 10:27), and provided examples perhaps analogous to gentiles (Luke 5:29–30; 7:34; 15:1–2; cf. John 4:40; Acts 8:25).

11:1–18: PETER DEFENDS WELCOMING GENTILES

In 11:1–18, Peter defends his acceptance of these gentiles as members of the covenant community. He recounts the very evidences that Luke has already reported; the consequent repetition for Luke's audience reinforces the divine initiative involved in the event.

¹¹²⁵ Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 24; Severus of Antioch, *Catena on Acts* 10.44; Ambrosiaster, *Ep. Gal.* 3.3.3; G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1951), 75; Turner, *Power*, 446–49; P. F. Esler, "Glossolalia and the Admission of Gentiles into the Early Christian Community," *BTB* 22 (3, 1992): 136–42. *Extolling God* seems grammatically linked with *tongues* in 10:46; cf. 2:11; 1 Cor 14:13–17.

¹¹²⁶ Jesus sent an apparent gentile in Luke 8:39, but cultural barriers would have precluded bringing him back to Galilee as a disciple (cf. Luke 8:38) in any case.

The church's criticisms¹¹²⁷ of eating in 11:3 are ironic in view of the report in 11:1: they *heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God*.¹¹²⁸ When they *heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God* through Philip, they sent Peter and John (8:14). Here, by contrast, they appear more concerned about Peter eating with gentiles than about new faith in Jesus, despite these gentiles (unlike the Samaritans) having already received the Spirit!

In Greek, the charge includes entering the gentile home (not simply *go to them* as in the NRSV; see comment on 10:28) and eating there. Avoiding table-fellowship with gentiles was a major issue for many Judeans (e.g., *Jub.* 22:16; see comment on Acts 10:23), even aside from Cornelius being an officer in the Roman army. Ironically, complaints about eating with sinners (attributed to Pharisees¹¹²⁹ and scribes in Luke 5:30; 15:2) or, as here, "entering" as well as becoming a guest of a sinner (19:7), now appear in the mouths of apostles and other disciples. The Pharisees of the Gospel, ironically often vilified by subsequent Christian readers, become Luke's prototype for ethnocentric Christians!

Although judicial speeches often return charges against accusers, Peter humbly identifies with his hearers (11:8, 17), seeking to persuade rather than divide. Rather than answering the specific charge of eating with pagans (11:3), Peter's speech addresses the more fundamental issue of whether in fact his fellow diners were pagans. Peter's speech mostly narrates recent events (11:5–15), a rhetorical pattern considered appropriate for recounting a mission (*Rhet. Alex.* 30, 1438a.6–19). Ancients were far more likely to accept an argument from divine necessity ("God told me to") than are most modern readers,¹¹³⁰ but probably no one other than Peter, leading disciple of Jesus in the flesh, would have persuaded the Jerusalem church.¹¹³¹

¹¹²⁷ The NRSV's *criticized* renders the verb *diakrinô*, precisely what God forbade Peter to do with the gentiles (10:20; 11:12; 15:9, Luke's only other uses of *diakrinô*, which can mean something like "discriminate").

¹¹²⁸ Except in urgent situations (cf. 23:31–33), travel from Caesarea to Jerusalem took two days. Their secondhand "hearing" contrasts with the firsthand hearing of 10:46; 11:18.

¹¹²⁹ Table-fellowship was a major issue of pre-70 Pharisaism (M. Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132–212* [Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983], 77), albeit not at a *priestly* level of purity (see Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 131–254).

¹¹³⁰ E.g., Isocrates, *Nicoles/Cyprians* 13, *Or.* 3.29; Quintilian, *Decl.* 323.20. For arguments from necessity, see R.D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 17; Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.1.18; Hermogenes, *Issues* 77.6–78.21; 2 Cor 12:1, 11.

¹¹³¹ Early Christians learned not to trust all claims to speak by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1–3), but for his audience, Peter's integrity is unquestioned, his apostolic

Added details here are valuable: for example, the voice was from heaven (11:9; see comment on 9:4). Six brothers accompanied Peter (11:12), at least double the maximum number of required witnesses to establish a matter (Deut 17:6; 19:15). Peter's gospel brought salvation (11:14; cf. 4:12; 15:1, 11), something that Jesus's followers should celebrate (Luke 15:24; 19:10). Entire households can be converted (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31–32; 18:8).¹¹³² For details that already appear in 10:1–48, see comment there.¹¹³³

Peter's clinching (and only explicit) argument (11:16–17) flows directly from the final point narrated, namely the Spirit falling on the gentiles (11:15, although all the Spirit's revelation in 11:5–14 also supports his argument). Using Jesus's *word* in a manner equal to using Scripture (11:16),¹¹³⁴ Peter shows that God confirmed these gentiles' acceptance in the very way he confirmed Jesus's Jewish followers as his people at Pentecost (11:17). If God granted them the greater baptism in the Spirit, Peter could hardly withhold the lesser baptism in water (see comment on 10:47).¹¹³⁵ People of the Spirit are God's eschatological people, with whom eating constitutes no scandal.

Peter's argument from God's will silences objections (11:18; cf. 21:14).¹¹³⁶ Although Luke portrays the terms starkly in terms of gentiles' salvation (11:14, 18; cf. 15:1, 9), most Jews, especially in the Diaspora, allowed that some gentiles would be saved; they did, however, doubt that God accepted them as members of his *people* without circumcision.¹¹³⁷ Peter's detractors might concede in 11:18 that God might save God-fearing gentiles or even welcome some isolated gentiles as "exceptions," but Luke's point in 11:18 is fuller: that God *has given* "repentance" to them as a group, as he did for Israel (5:31).¹¹³⁸

sensitivity to the Spirit demonstrated, and his cumulative evidence for the Spirit's involvement compelling.

¹¹³² See further Matson, *Conversion Narratives*.

¹¹³³ On this and Luke's other retellings, see Maloney, *Narration*, 67–100.

¹¹³⁴ For "remembering" Jesus's words, see 20:35; Luke 22:61; 24:6–8; John 2:22; 12:16; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 17; Keener, *Christobiography*, 365–496.

¹¹³⁵ Because baptism could accompany conversion to Judaism (see comment on Acts 2:38), God, who had baptized these gentiles, clearly accepted their conversion without circumcision.

¹¹³⁶ As compelling arguments were known to do; e.g., Neh 5:8; Demosthenes, *Cor.* 112; Plutarch, *Cic.* 12.5; Josephus, *Life* 298–99.

¹¹³⁷ See the survey of views in Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 52–69.

¹¹³⁸ Giving repentance is an idiom (e.g., Wis 12:10, 19; Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.106; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.178), but (apart from 2 Tim 2:25) only in Acts 5:31 and 11:18 in the NT.

Bridging Horizons: Divided Loyalties

Faith united the early Judean believers, but social differences soon divided them (cf. 6:1). James was able to maintain the support of the more culturally conservative, even nationalistic elements, whereas Peter's involvement with gentiles here creates problems that he later seeks to avoid (cf. 12:3, 17; Gal 2:12). In an effort to avoid division over what were locally secondary issues, the leaders tried to maintain peace (Acts 21:20–26).

But whereas evangelism and even survival may invite social identification and accommodation, unity with other believers must transcend it. In the face of the greater demands of Christ's Lordship, ethnic, class, caste, and other loyalties fade in significance. Jesus's true followers must renounce such prejudices and abandon discrimination. ****

11:19–30: ANTIOCH SERVES GENTILES AND JERUSALEM

Having accepted Peter's argument (11:18), the Jerusalem church soon confirms God's work in Antioch. They do so through Spirit-filled Barnabas (11:22–24), as they had earlier confirmed God's work in Samaria through Peter and John, who were also agents of the Spirit (8:14–17). Barnabas thus becomes a link between the Jerusalem church and Paul's gentile mission, because he recruits Saul, called partly to the gentiles (cf. 9:15), to help in the intercultural work in Antioch (11:25–26). Luke thus connects Paul to the seminal spread of the movement to gentiles (though he arrived after it began) and the time and location when the movement's detractors began to call them "Christians."

This gentile-reaching Antioch church then reaches back to Jerusalem (in response to Jerusalemite prophets) to meet its need, now through Barnabas and Saul (11:27–30). For Luke, Antioch becomes (and probably historically was) the pivotal link between the church's heritage in Jerusalem and its mission in the Diaspora, including among gentiles.

The process of reaching gentiles perhaps began soon after hellenist believers left Jerusalem, and not just in Antioch.¹¹³⁹ Yet cosmopolitan, multicultural Antioch, which already hosted proselytes (cf. 6:5) and God-fearers, was the most prominent point of contact and transition. It is important to Luke as the subsequent base for Paul's Diaspora mission.

¹¹³⁹ Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 196.

A Closer Look: Antioch

Antioch¹¹⁴⁰ traditionally ruled the rest of Syria and was called its “mother-city” (Strabo 16.2.5).¹¹⁴¹ It was also the seat of the Roman governor (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.95, 126). Since 47 BCE, Antioch had been a “free” city, that is, one which the Romans allowed to govern itself mostly by its own laws (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.18.79). Although estimates of its size vary widely (with median estimates of some quarter million), some ranked it as high as third in the empire after Rome and Alexandria (Josephus, *War* 3.29).

Antioch was a pagan city, just about 5 miles from the famous ancient cult center of Daphnê (Strabo 16.2.4; Josephus, *War* 1.328), but the city also had a large Jewish population (Ag. *Ap.* 2.39).¹¹⁴² Because of Syria’s location and connections with the east, the Jewish community here was probably more closely connected with and like that in Judea than were most Diaspora Jewish communities.¹¹⁴³ Later, during the war of 66–73, Antioch was among the few predominantly gentile cities in the region to spare its Jewish inhabitants, probably partly due to somewhat healthy relations there.¹¹⁴⁴ Antioch thus offered believers a more natural bridge between Jew and gentile than in Caesarea, a hotbed of ethnic tension.¹¹⁴⁵ Still, Antioch remained quite vulnerable to anti-Jewish prejudice (*War* 7.46–62, 103, 108–10; *Ant.* 12.121–124). ****

After introducing Saul in 7:58, Luke alternates between narratives of Saul and the Jerusalem church. Acts 11:19–30 interrupts a larger section in which Peter predominates for the final time in Acts (9:32–12:24); in it Luke

¹¹⁴⁰ On which see further, e.g., W. A. Meeks and R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (SBLSPS 13; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978); Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 143–52.

¹¹⁴¹ For this title on its coins, see R. Tracey, “Syria,” pages 223–78 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 238.

¹¹⁴² Josephus thinks it the Diaspora’s largest (*War* 7.43), but Alexandria’s may be higher (see Philo, *Flacc.* 55). On Antiochan Jews, see E. Bridge, “Christians and Jews in Antioch,” 208–36 in Harding and Nobbs, *World*, 214–20.

¹¹⁴³ Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 79–80; J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 242–58. Most Jews lived in the Diaspora (cf. Philo, *Flacc.* 45–46), and they proliferated in part because, unlike Greeks, they refused to abandon babies (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.8).

¹¹⁴⁴ Josephus, *War* 2.479–80; for healthy relations, cf. *War* 1.425; 7.43–45; *Ant.* 12.119–20; 16.148; Ag. *Ap.* 2.39.

¹¹⁴⁵ Against inferring (from silence) syncretism in Antioch, when Paul was in leadership there and the apostles remained in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9–14; comments in Keener, *Galatians* [Cambridge, 2018], 83–96), see Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 21–22, 260–61, 279–91.

reintroduces Barnabas and Saul, who will be agents of Antioch's Diaspora mission (chs. 13–15). The interruption is obvious, since the section begins and ends with pivotal verses that bracket other material with a continuous story (8:4 with 11:19; 11:30 with 12:25).

Although Luke's narrative focus on Paul allows only a summary of ministry in 11:19–20, it was clearly a dramatic step. Luke emphasizes that Paul's cross-cultural mission to gentiles had historical precedent, even if his deliberate transgeographic program did not. Believers scattered in 8:4 preached to Jews not only in Judea (8:1) but as far north as Antioch, more than 300 miles from Jerusalem. *Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch* (11:19) offered more sites friendly to dispersed Hellenists than much of Judea,¹¹⁴⁶ some already had connections there (4:36; 6:5; cf. 2:10; 6:9).

Some Cypriote and Cyrenian believers in Antioch, however, began preaching even to Hellenists – in this case meaning not hellenized Jews (with whom they are contrasted, 11:19) but hellenized Syrians (11:20).¹¹⁴⁷ This is not surprising; Antioch was cosmopolitan, with many proselytes and God-fearers (Josephus, *War* 7.45), making the boundaries between Jew and gentile thinner than in Judea. Mention of Cyprus and Cyrene also anticipates two leaders in the Antioch church (13:1; cf. 4:36).¹¹⁴⁸

Word soon reaches Jerusalem's church (11:22), which now responds more favorably than in 11:1–3. They send Barnabas to investigate (11:22) as they had earlier sent Peter and John to Samaria (8:14).¹¹⁴⁹ That he is *full of the Holy Spirit* (11:24) suggests that he will favor the expansion of the gospel (1:8), and in 11:23a, Barnabas does not find even the deficiency that Peter and John found in Samaria (8:16).

Like all new believers, however, those in Antioch must be urged to persevere (11:23b; cf. 13:43; 14:22). To this end, Barnabas recruits another Hellenist, one with an exceptional Jerusalem academic background

¹¹⁴⁶ Phoenicia was directly beyond Caesarea (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.14.69; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.333). Luke 4:26–27; 6:17; and 10:13–14 may prefigure the growth of churches there (Acts 15:3; 21:2–5; 27:3).

¹¹⁴⁷ Cf. Mark 7:26; Everett Ferguson, "The Hellenists in the Book of Acts," *ResQ* 12 (4, 1969): 159–80.

¹¹⁴⁸ Cf. perhaps earlier Simon of Cyrene (Luke 23:26), the preservation of whose name suggests that he became part of the Jerusalem church; compare perhaps Mark 15:21 with Rom 16:13. Cyrene had a significant Jewish population (2 Macc 2:23; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.44; *Ant.* 14.115–18), but interethnic relations were not good (*Ant.* 16.160, 169; *Life* 424; *War* 7.437–46).

¹¹⁴⁹ Barnabas was gracious (cf. 4:36; 9:27; 15:37–39), a *good man* (11:24; cf. Luke 6:45; 23:50; but more technically, 18:19); some other Jerusalemite believers may have been less favorable (15:1, 5).

(cf. 22:3), to join him and other Antioch leaders in teaching the disciples (11:26; 13:1). Geography may have been a factor; Tarsus, where Saul was (9:30), was perhaps only a third of the distance from Antioch as Jerusalem.¹¹⁵⁰ More important, however, Barnabas knew Saul's testimony (9:27), hence his calling to gentiles (9:15) – a calling relevant to what God was doing in Antioch (11:20–23).

A Closer Look: "Christians"

Some people in Antioch, most likely high-status Roman citizens, conceived a new label for Jesus's followers. Adapting the nomenclature of Roman political parties (e.g., Herodians, Pompeians, Othonians),¹¹⁵¹ they ridiculed them as *Christiani*, "the partisans of Christ" (i.e., of the Judean king).¹¹⁵² Some thus continued to understand Jesus's movement in purely human, political terms (cf. 17:7; Luke 23:2, 5), although here it does not yet invite persecution and so was probably intended only as mockery. This title of derision quickly spread (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16)¹¹⁵³ and was eventually adopted by Jesus's followers themselves.¹¹⁵⁴ For Luke, Jesus's followers now *bring* (lit., "bear") his name on a new level (Acts 9:15–16; cf. Luke 21:17). ****

Prophets come from Jerusalem (11:27), though Antioch has or will soon have its own (13:1). Although most people believed in prophets and oracular shrines, they did not expect religious movements *full* of prophets or, as in Acts, most of whose members were at least potentially prophetic (Acts 2:17–18).¹¹⁵⁵ (This is particularly noteworthy considering some Jewish institutional circles regarding prophecy's cessation or diminution.)¹¹⁵⁶

Agabus is featured here for his message (11:28), which advances the narrative (11:29–30; 12:25), and also because of his forthcoming role in

¹¹⁵⁰ Once in Tarsus, Barnabas could begin inquiring in synagogues about Saul.

¹¹⁵¹ E.g., Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.12.87; Velleius Paterculus 2.49.3; 2.74.1; 2.84.1; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.34; 2.27; 3.6.

¹¹⁵² For Syrian understanding of Jesus as king of the Jews, cf. Mara bar Sarapion, possibly c. 73 CE; for Jesus mocked as king, see Luke 23:11, 35–38.

¹¹⁵³ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44 (attributing it to Romans in 64 CE); Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96–97; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2; possibly also Josephus, *Ant.* 18.64; *CIL* 4.679.

¹¹⁵⁴ E.g., *Did.* 12.4; 1 *Clement* 48.1; Ignatius, *Eph.* 11.2; *Magn.* 4.1; 10.1, 3; *Tral.* 6.1; *Rom.* 3.2–3; *Philad.* 6.1; *Mart. Pol.* 3.2; 10.1; 12.1–2; Justin, 1 *Apol.* 4–16. Critics in Judea denounced them as *Nazarenes* (Acts 24:5), i.e., followers of the obscure Nazarene (cf. 6:14).

¹¹⁵⁵ Cf. Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 14:5, 24, 29–32; 1 Thess 5:19–20; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; *Didache* 10.7; 11.3, 11.

¹¹⁵⁶ See 1 Macc 9:27; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.41; Best, "Use of Pneuma," 222–25; Aune, "Προφήτης"; Keener, *Spirit in Gospels and Acts*, 13–19.

21:10–11. As in the OT, God sometimes prophetically announced a famine so people could prepare for it (e.g., 7:10–12; Gen 41:29–36; 2 Kgs 8:1–2) and help others in such times (Gen 50:20; 1 Kgs 17:1, 9–16; Luke 4:25–26). Some expected global, eschatological famines,¹¹⁵⁷ but food shortages also characterized ancient life generally (Luke 15:14).¹¹⁵⁸ Although *all the world* might be prophetic or Lukan hyperbole (cf. Acts 17:6; 19:27; 24:5), a series of severe food shortages rocked the eastern Mediterranean world during Claudius's reign, especially in 45–48 CE, not many years after this prophecy.¹¹⁵⁹

Antioch's history and location made it important in trade, generating wealth.¹¹⁶⁰ By contrast, earlier loss of properties (8:1) may have exacerbated Jerusalem believers' poverty (11:28–29; Rom 15:26–27), though some remained (Acts 12:12–13). Localities normally depended on wealthy benefactors during food shortages;¹¹⁶¹ a family of royal Diaspora proselytes helped Jerusalem during this famine.¹¹⁶² Although Antioch could expect the famine to strike them as well,¹¹⁶³ the disciples there (and not just the wealthy ones; 11:29) sacrifice for their Judean siblings. They send it through two of their leaders who had long lived in Jerusalem (11:30).

Such a communal, transgeographic sacrifice (cf. 2 Cor 8:13–14) was extraordinary in antiquity. It fits not only Luke's emphasis on care for the poor (e.g., Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37; 6:1–3; Luke 3:11; 12:33; 14:33; 18:22),¹¹⁶⁴ but his effort to reconcile his intercultural movement's remaining tension between heritage and mission (cf. Rom 15:26–27). The church most involved in reaching gentiles (11:19–26) remains in continuity with the mother church in Jerusalem (11:27–30). For elders, see comment on 14:23; the gift may be sent to elders because they held financial oversight (6:2–3)

¹¹⁵⁷ Luke 21:11; Rev 6:5–8; *Jub.* 23:18; 1 *En.* 80:2; *Sib. Or.* 3.540–42; 4.149–51; 4 *Ezra* 6:22; 2 *Bar.* 27:6; 70:8.

¹¹⁵⁸ See R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 249–54.

¹¹⁵⁹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 3.320; 20.51, 101; Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.43; Suetonius, *Claud.* 18.2; B. Winter, "Acts and Food Shortages," 59–78 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*; Riesner, *Early Period*, 127–32; B. W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 216–20.

¹¹⁶⁰ At least some Jewish residents of the area also had wealth (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.24).

¹¹⁶¹ P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 101.

¹¹⁶² Josephus, *Ant.* 3.320–21; 20.51–53, 101. Funds contributed would buy grain in Egypt for transport to Jerusalem.

¹¹⁶³ Orosius, *Hist.* 7.6.12, suggests that it did.

¹¹⁶⁴ As Luke depicts both the Twelve and the Seven serving the poor (4:35–37; 6:3), so he depicts Barnabas (already generous, 4:37) and Saul before their gentile mission (13:1–5), whatever their prior ministry he merely sketches (11:23–26).

after Philip and others scattered (8:1) or because the apostles were now in hiding (cf. 12:1–3).

12:1–5: HEROD'S PERSECUTION

The narrative has shifted back and forth between Paul (leading figure of the foreign gentile mission; 7:58–8:3; 9:1–31; 11:19–30; 12:25–13:3) and Peter (leader of the Jerusalem apostles; 8:14–25; 9:32–11:18). Acts 12:1–24 is the last major narrative with Peter as the central human character. Once Peter leaves Jerusalem (12:17), the narrative soon follows Paul through the rest of Acts (12:25–28:31; though cf. 15:7–11).

Favor can come and go (cf. 2:47; 21:20; Luke 19:48); Jesus's movement must spread rather than depending on the vagaries of popular support in any one location. During a previous persecution, the apostles remained in Jerusalem (8:1); now the persecution becomes so harsh that even Peter leaves (12:17), if only temporarily (cf. 12:23; 15:7). The locus of God's activity, and focus of Luke's narrative, is gradually shifting. God continues to be active in the Jerusalem church, as 21:20 demonstrates, but if Luke's ideal audience hears this work any time after 66 CE, they will know that the movement's future must for the near future lie beyond Jerusalem (cf. Luke 21:21, 24).

In Acts 10:1–11:18, an apostle welcomed a military officer of Rome into God's people. Here the supposedly pro-Roman king of Judea, like the Council before him, opposes the same apostle – contributing (along with, ironically, Agrippa's own acceptance of pagan values) to the king's own demise (12:23). (Historically, Agrippa's catering to Jewish nationalism in fact seems to have encouraged nationalist resistance to Rome, although he undoubtedly would have tried to check that trend had he survived.)

That the mission of Paul and Barnabas to serve the Jerusalem church frames the account of Agrippa's persecution suggests that (in terms of narrative implications, not necessarily historical chronology) representatives of the Antioch church face risks and share the Jerusalem church's sufferings.

In 12:1–17, although James son of Zebedee dies, God's angel rescues Peter from prison and imminent execution. Ironically, however, neither he nor the people praying for him initially believe it! This irony is close to the heart of the narrative, reminding the reader that, although God often acts behind the scenes or through angels, it is still his purposes, rather than the

excellence or faith of the narrative’s chief human characters, that drive the church’s expanding mission.

Luke frequently parallels Peter, Paul, and some other characters in Acts with Jesus (see introduction).¹¹⁶⁵ Whereas Peter is not executed, this final major story about Peter in Acts echoes Luke’s passion narrative for Jesus.¹¹⁶⁶

Jesus in Luke 22–24	Peter in Acts 12
Passover setting (Luke 22:1)	Passover setting (Acts 12:2)
A Herod (Antipas) is among the powerful oppressors (Luke 23:6–12; Acts 4:27)	A Herod (Agrippa I) is the powerful oppressor (Acts 12:1)
Laying on hands (Luke 9:44; 20:19)	Laying on hands (Acts 12:1)
“Arresting” (Luke 22:54)	“Arresting” (Acts 12:3)
“Handing over” (Luke 23:25; 24:7)	“Handing over” (Acts 12:4)
“Angels” announce to women (Luke 24:23)	An angel guides Peter (Acts 12:7–10) and he announces his freedom to a woman (12:13)
Women are disbelieved (Luke 24:11), and disciples later disbelieve “for joy” (24:41)	Rhoda left Peter “because of joy” (Acts 12:14), and disciples disbelieve her (12:15)
The disciples think Jesus a “ghost” (Luke 24:37)	The disciples think Peter a ghost of sorts (Acts 12:15)
After conversation, Jesus withdraws (Luke 24:51)	After conversation, Peter withdraws (Acts 12:17)

These parallels may facilitate Luke’s transition from Peter to James in the Jewish mission and from Peter to Paul in the gentile mission.¹¹⁶⁷

Agrippa I is the most dangerous and potentially lethal human oppressor of the church in Luke’s narrative so far. Luke’s preferred name for him, “Herod,” links him with his brother-in-law Herod Antipas, who beheaded another man of God (Luke 9:9),¹¹⁶⁸ rather than with the more positive role

¹¹⁶⁵ See Keener, *Acts*, 1:555–62, and sources cited there.
¹¹⁶⁶ See Johnson, *Acts*, 218; Green, “Acts,” 751; Marguerat, *Actes*, 429.
¹¹⁶⁷ See R. W. Wall, “Successors to ‘the Twelve’ according to Acts 12:1–17,” *CBQ* 53 (4, 1991): 628–43.
¹¹⁶⁸ Josephus sometimes calls Antipas, “Herod” (*Ant.* 18.104–6, 243–55) and possibly recognizes that Agrippa was a Herod (*Ant.* 19.328). For Luke’s play on names, cf., e.g., Allen, *Death*, 23; F. S. Spencer, “Acts and Modern Literary Approaches,” pages 381–414 in Winter and Clarke, *Literary Setting*, 405; Weaver, *Epiphany*, 209–10.

in Luke's narrative later filled by Agrippa II.¹¹⁶⁹ Agrippa was the first Jewish king since his grandfather Herod the Great, and through his grandmother Mariamne also descended from the Maccabees.¹¹⁷⁰ Although he held the royal title earlier, he reigned in person in Judea from 41–44 CE,¹¹⁷¹ and was enormously popular with the people. His brief reign shaped a tide of nationalism evident a generation later in 21:21, 28–30; 22:21–22. Shaped by Roman public life, Agrippa craved honor (cf. Acts 12:3, 21–23). And Agrippa, as king, had legal authority the Sanhedrin lacked to execute subjects.

As 12:3 suggests, Agrippa identified with and strove to please Judean traditionalists and nationalists,¹¹⁷² sometimes to the discomfort of Rome (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.326–27, 338–42). (Ancient audiences disdained those who catered to the whims of fickle popular opinion.) He could betray others when it served his advantage (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.250, 255), but he did risk his own security to protect Jewish piety (Philo, *Embassy* 276–329; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.296–99; 19.301). He lavished wealth on public entertainments, including an occasion where he publicly exterminated 1,400 criminals (*Ant.* 19.337). Publicly executing James or Peter might appear to him a small matter.

Luke's essential information seems solid. As in this account, John's brother James (who figures heavily in gospel tradition) probably did die around this time, whereas Peter did not (see Gal 2:9). The narrative's timing is vague but fits Agrippa's brief reign; the escape fits Jerusalem's topography; and Agrippa's death fits Josephus's account. Agrippa acts in character with some of what is known of him extrinsic to Acts.

In contrast to 8:1–4, Agrippa in 12:1–3 targets especially the movement's top leaders.¹¹⁷³ *Herod laid violent hands upon some* (12:1; cf. the same

¹¹⁶⁹ Tannehill, *Acts*, 315.

¹¹⁷⁰ See Josephus, *Ant.* 16.133; 18.110, 126, 131.

¹¹⁷¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 19.292, 351; Philo, *Flacc.* 25.

¹¹⁷² Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 19.293–94, 328–34. Possibly he did so partly to compensate for potential perceptions of his life in Rome, where he also lavished resources on pleasing others (*Ant.* 18.143–46). Jewish tradition honored his Jewish identity (*m. Sotah* 7:8; *Sipre Deut.* 157.3.1). Yet he also continued currying favor with gentiles (*Ant.* 19.338–39), even commissioning a coin for Caesarea depicting its patron deity Fortune (see E. Carmon, *Inscriptions Reveal: Documents from the Time of the Bible, the Mishna, and the Talmud* [Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1973], §211 [Engl. p. 100; Heb. p. 216]).

¹¹⁷³ A common strategy, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.40.3; Cicero, *Fam.* 12.30.4.

phrase, rendered *arrest*, in Luke 21:12), but the Lord will deliver Peter *from* his *hands* (Acts 12:11).

Decapitation was the most merciful form of Roman execution, particularly when it could be successfully limited to one or two strokes. The condemned would be stripped, flogged, then immobilized by being tied to stakes for beheading.¹¹⁷⁴ Then as today, people struggled with why some perished while others survived.¹¹⁷⁵

Passover and *Unleavened Bread* (12:3–4) were often treated as a single festival in this period (Luke 22:1, 7; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.21; 18.29), and everyone knew that Peter's teacher Jesus had been executed then (Luke 22:15). Like others (3:20; 21:12; Acts 8:3), Peter was now imprisoned (12:5), fulfilling a promise he had failed before (Luke 22:33–34, 57–61). Each of the *four squads* would contain four soldiers each; each squad would work one of four shifts.¹¹⁷⁶ Peter was chained to a soldier at either arm, leaving two unchained soldiers at the gate (Acts 12:6; cf. 21:33).¹¹⁷⁷

12:6–11: GOD'S ANGEL RELEASES PETER

At almost the last possible moment for a discreet deliverance, an angel awakens Peter, guiding him step-by-step to safety until he is awake enough to know the rest of what he must do (12:6–10). Light shines as the angel appears (12:7), as with the angel in Luke 2:9, but the guards remain oblivious (for selective revelation, cf. 9:7; 10:41; Luke 24:16, 31). Yet against the NRSV, the angel does not merely tap the soundly sleeping Peter; he “strikes” him, a term (*patassô*) used also in 12:23: the angel strikes Peter to deliver him, but Herod to kill him.

The cloak and sandals in 12:8 are Peter's own; prisons supplied little food, and did not supply clothing. People often used outer cloaks as blankets at night,¹¹⁷⁸ but Peter will need his to protect him from the cool night air. Although an angel has freed Peter by night before (5:19), he has

¹¹⁷⁴ E.g., Valerius Maximus 5.8.1 (on an early period).

¹¹⁷⁵ Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 93.1; cf. Mek. *Nezikin* 18.63ff.

¹¹⁷⁶ On units of four soldiers, cf. J. L. Jones, “The Roman Army,” pages 187–217 in *The Catacombs and the Colosseum* (ed. S. Benko and J. J. O'Rourke; Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1971), 193–94.

¹¹⁷⁷ On chaining, see Rapske, *Custody*, 25–31, 206–9.

¹¹⁷⁸ Deut 24:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.269; A. T. Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion* (Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2000), 30. On sandals, see 60–64.

also had symbolic visions (10:10–16; cf. 2:17), which at first is how he interprets his deliverance here.¹¹⁷⁹

The narrative bristles with irony:

- Israelites at the first Passover were girded and sandaled, ready to escape captivity (Exod 12:11) – in contrast to Peter, at a later Passover season (Acts 12:4, 8).
- Whereas the church is praying fervently for his deliverance (12:5, 12), Peter is sound asleep (12:6–7; cf. Luke 22:45).
- Neither the people praying (Acts 12:12, 15) nor Peter himself (12:9) initially believe his release.
- Peter thought the angel he was seeing was a “vision” (12:7) just as Jesus’s male followers once had supposed that his female followers saw only a “vision” of angels (Luke 24:23).
- An angel frees Peter (Acts 12:7–11) but his supporters suppose *him* an angel (or ghost; 12:15)¹¹⁸⁰ – as some supposed when they saw the risen Lord (Luke 24:37).
- When a woman joyfully proclaims his survival (Acts 12:14), others faithlessly dismiss her testimony like those who dismissed that of the women at the tomb (Luke 24:11).
- Whereas Peter’s guards in 12:6, 10 fail to keep him in, in 12:13–15 his own supporters keep Peter out.
- Whereas the iron gate in 12:10 opens *of its own accord*, in 12:14 the gate of the house where fellow-Christians pray for his safety remains barred to him.¹¹⁸¹
- Whereas Peter comes to his senses only when he recognizes that the “vision” (12:9) is real (12:11), believers accuse Rhoda of madness (12:15) for declaring Peter’s presence.

¹¹⁷⁹ People knew stories of divinely engineered prison escapes (5:19; cf. 16:26); in Greek tradition, see esp. Euripides, *Bacch.* 346–57, 443–48, 498, 510–643; in Jewish tradition by this period, Artapanus 3.23; cf. Ps 102:20. For gates opening or chains falling “by themselves,” see, e.g., Euripides, *Bacch.* 447–48; Apollonius Rhodius 4.41–42; Artapanus 3.23 (at least according to Eusebius); cf. Josh 6:5 LXX. Greek sources also addressed divinely enabled invisibility (e.g., Homer, *Il.* 3.381; 5.23, 344–45; 20.321, 443–46). Sometimes they also apparently wondered if they were dreaming (Aristaenetos, *Erotic Letters* 2.14.9–10)!

¹¹⁸⁰ For beliefs in an angelic afterlife, cf., e.g., 1 *En.* 51:5 (trans. M. Knibb); 104:4; Acts 23:8–9.

¹¹⁸¹ Those inside have been “knocking” in prayer that a figurative door may be “opened” for them (Luke 11:5–10), for Peter’s release (Acts 12:5, 12) – yet fail to believe that the answer to their prayers is knocking on their door!

Jerusalem had multiple prisons, but Agrippa may have detained Peter in the most secure place, the Fortress Antonia (Josephus, *War* 1.118). If so, Peter may have followed the street that ran south alongside the temple's Western Wall. He could then cross Robinson's Arch to enter the crowded Lower City or, more quickly, Wilson's Arch into the wealthier Upper City (note the gate and servant in Acts 12:13). Unlike Antioch, few cities had torches as street lights; in the dark, Peter could likely advance unrecognized.

12:12–17: VISITING THE PRAYER MEETING

Once free, Peter goes to let some believers at a nearby house church know what has happened to him, and to leave instructions to spread the word. He discovers that even believers spending the night in prayer for him are astonished that he has been delivered and has visited them.

A Closer Look: House Churches

Church buildings as such became prevalent only in the fourth century. For the first two centuries, churches met especially in homes, providing a relational and neighborhood-friendly model for conversions and discipleship. This pattern was useful in times of repression, reflects patterns used by many ancient associations (including some emerging synagogues)¹¹⁸² and in some pedagogic contexts,¹¹⁸³ and was financially viable. It existed even independent of Paul (e.g., Rom 16:5), probably recalling Jesus's own instruction (Mark 6:10; Luke 9:4; Luke 10:5–7//Matt 10:12–14).

Given their voluntary character, regular meetings and meals,¹¹⁸⁴ and lack of sacrifices, outsiders may have viewed Christian gatherings as philosophic schools¹¹⁸⁵ or cult associations.¹¹⁸⁶ The household model fit

¹¹⁸² See L. M. White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (2 vols.; HTS 42; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996–97), e.g., 1:26–69, 114–18.

¹¹⁸³ E.g., *m. Abot* 1:4; Klauck, *Context*, 63.

¹¹⁸⁴ Homes also contained kitchen facilities needed for communal meals (with, e.g., B. Blue, "Acts and the House Church," pages 119–222 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 121).

¹¹⁸⁵ S. K. Stowers, "Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?" pages 81–102 in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001); T. Schmeller, "Gegenwelten: Zum Vergleich zwischen paulinischen Gemeinden und nichtchristlichen Gruppen," *BZ* 47 (2, 2003): 167–85; R. L. Wilken, "The Christians as the Romans (and Greeks) Saw Them," pages 100–25 in *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (ed. E. P. Sanders; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 107–10.

¹¹⁸⁶ Wilken, "Christians," 110–18; Harland, *Associations*, 211; Klauck, *Context*, 54.

Christians' self-understanding as family. Because homeowners served as hosts and sometimes patrons, their names often identified the group that met there, as here (Acts 12:13; cf. 18:7; Rom 16:3–5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2). ****

"Mary" (12:12) was "easily the most popular woman's name in 1st-century Palestine,"¹¹⁸⁷ so Luke identifies her more specifically as John Mark's mother (which implies that Luke's audience already knows of Mark). John was a common Judean name unfamiliar to gentiles; Marcus is a Latin praenomen, among Jews used mostly in the west and otherwise unknown in Judea.¹¹⁸⁸ Together the names specify the individual; Marcus suggests a Diaspora orientation (12:25; 15:37).

Since Mary's home can host *many* guests (12:12), has a door in a larger outer gate (cf. Luke 16:20), and Mary has a servant (12:13), her home may be in wealthy Upper City Jerusalem.¹¹⁸⁹ Vestibules in wealthy Jerusalem homes opened into the dining hall, or *triclinium*.¹¹⁹⁰ Even most wealthy homes, however, though equipped with both ritual and other baths, lacked indoor toilet facilities, due to lack of running water in Jerusalem.¹¹⁹¹ Still, very wealthy homes had porters, rather than one servant doubling as porter (John 18:16–17), as here.¹¹⁹²

One wishing to enter a wealthy home first knocked (Seneca, *Controv.* 10.4.22), and would not enter until invited to do so (Plutarch, *Cim.* 17.1). Rather than answering doors themselves,¹¹⁹³ well-to-do people counted on slaves to function as porters.¹¹⁹⁴ Their responsibility was to identify and screen those who wished to enter.¹¹⁹⁵ Rhoda's name was common among slaves, especially of gentile descent.¹¹⁹⁶

¹¹⁸⁷ M. H. Williams, "Names," 90–91, 107.

¹¹⁸⁸ Among Jews, it seems normally a praenomen of those who had acquired citizenship (M. H. Williams, "Names," 105).

¹¹⁸⁹ A Diaspora settler in Jerusalem who was likely her relative had also been a landowner (4:36–37; cf. Col 4:10).

¹¹⁹⁰ Safrai, "Home," 732. For a sense of the most wealthy homes' magnificence, see Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 95–138.

¹¹⁹¹ Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 143.

¹¹⁹² For full-time porters, see, e.g., Lucian, *Slander* 30; for any servant, see Menander, *Epitrepontes* 1075–77; Aelius Aristides, *Def. Or.* 380, §127; apparently Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.3.

¹¹⁹³ Theophrastus, *Char.* 4.9; 28.3; Tibullus 1.2.7, 15–24, 41, 55–56.

¹¹⁹⁴ Suetonius, *Rhet.* 3; *Aug.* 19.2; C. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140. For women as doorkeepers, see, e.g., Aristaenetos, *Erotic Letters* 2.19.8–10; John 18:16–17; cf. Cicero, *Att.* 1.12; also (brought to my attention by R. Pervo, personal correspondence) *T. Job* 7:1–12.

¹¹⁹⁵ Cicero, *Phil.* 2.31.77; Ovid, *Fasti* 1.138.

¹¹⁹⁶ M. H. Williams, "Names," 111.

Excited to hear Peter, she runs and tells the others, leaving Peter still knocking at the door (12:13–16)!¹¹⁹⁷ Luke's excuse for her, however, is the same as that for the men in the resurrection narrative; she is overwhelmed with joy (12:14; Luke 24:41).¹¹⁹⁸ In contrast to another female servant (*paidiskê*) who recognized and revealed Peter in Luke 22:56, Rhoda's announcement is positive. Rhoda is the only named Christian slave in Luke-Acts (as Mary is the only named Christian slaveholder), and she is the most positive character at the prayer meeting.¹¹⁹⁹ Some suggest that Luke, using a common ancient comic stereotype, provides humor at her expense. Given her activity parallel to that of the women at the tomb,¹²⁰⁰ however, it is much likelier that the joke is on everyone else.¹²⁰¹

Peter's business is urgent; once his escape is discovered, known contacts could be investigated. Thus he gestures for silence in the midst of astonished commotion (12:16–17).¹²⁰² Luke presumes his audience already familiar with James the Lord's brother (12:17; cf. 1:14; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–3). Peter's gentile commitments (cf. Acts 11:3) may have compromised him politically among the pious masses in Jerusalem in ways that James the Lord's brother's obvious devotion to the law may not have, helping to explain Peter's subsequent need to

¹¹⁹⁷ Probably not in the safest neighborhood for him, since many Upper City homes belonged to Sadducees and were not far apart (Avigad, *Jerusalem*, 83). If it is the final night of a festival (cf. possibly 12:3–4), neighbors might expect other Jerusalemite homes to have many guests.

¹¹⁹⁸ Cf. Gen 24:28–30; perhaps Gen 29:12; Exod 2:20. Cf. also Luke's opposite excuse for the disciples in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45).

¹¹⁹⁹ Cf. Reimer, *Women*, 242; Luke 1:48, 51–53. For slavery in antiquity, including regarding women slaves and Judean household slavery, and slavery's bearing on the present text, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:1906–42; on interpretations of Rhoda's role, esp. 2:1942–45.

¹²⁰⁰ She announcing that the supposed dead one is alive (Luke 24:9); men disbelieve her (24:11). Ancient interpreters also discerned the parallel with the unbelieving women of Luke 24; see, e.g., Arator, *Acts* 1. For negative ancient attitudes toward women's testimony, see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 4.219 (regarding both women and slaves); Plutarch, *Publ.* 8.4; Justinian, *Inst.* 2.10.6; *Sipra Vayyiqra Dibura Dehobah* pq. 7.45.1.1.

¹²⁰¹ Cf. K. Chambers, "‘Knock, Knock – Who's There?’ Acts 12.6–17 as a Comedy of Errors," pages 89–97 in *The Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. A.-J. Levine with M. Blickenstaff; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 92–93, 97; P. E. Spencer, "‘Mad’ Rhoda in Acts 12:12–17 Disciple Exemplar," *CBQ* 79 (2, 2017): 282–98. The joke might be even on Peter, who leaves in 12:17 without Luke explicitly mentioning his entrance (Chambers, "Knock," 93). Luke is not writing comedy, but interspersing light with serious elements was considered good form (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 8.21.1).

¹²⁰² For gestures for silence, see Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 140; cf. 52–54.

conciliate conservatives (cf. Gal 2:12). Unable to stamp out the entire movement, enemies might focus on its most “radical” leaders. For a Jerusalem setting, then, James might be more irenic and gain a better hearing.

Peter’s anonymous destination (12:17) is presumably not yet Rome.¹²⁰³ Nevertheless, any location within Judea (e.g., 9:32–43) would remain with Agrippa’s jurisdiction, so it is possible that he traveled further (cf. later 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 2:11–12; 1 Pet 1:1). He returns some time after Agrippa’s death (Acts 15:7–11), though not permanently (21:18).

12:18–24: THE PROUD KING’S DEATH

This narrative underlines Agrippa’s arrogance and abuse of capital authority; it also reminds readers that true power over life and death resides with God. Agrippa kills James, tries to kill Peter, and kills his own guards. Peter refuses to fear those who kill the body (Acts 12:6; Luke 12:4), whereas Agrippa refuses to fear the one who casts into hell (Luke 12:5; Acts 12:22–23). Peter and Paul, ironically better Jews than Agrippa (cf. 12:3), reject worship (10:25–26; 14:11, 15; cf. 28:6), whereas Agrippa, like Satan, welcomes it (12:22–23; Luke 4:6–7).¹²⁰⁴ But God brings down the arrogance of kings (e.g., Luke 1:52; cf. Isa 10:12; 14:4–6; Dan 4:30–33; 5:20; 8:23–25).

If the changing of the guard reveals Peter’s absence in the morning, probably only the four guards on the final watch of the night would be implicated and executed. In any case, Peter’s escape causes Agrippa to lose face; he can recoup some lost honor only by executing those he could hold responsible for the fiasco (12:19).¹²⁰⁵ Although preserving guards’ lives was also divinely desirable (16:28), events under the tyrant here take their human course without divine intervention.

¹²⁰³ See correctly Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 489.

¹²⁰⁴ Gentile Christians directly critiquing pervasive eastern veneration of the emperor would invite repression, but Luke’s strict monotheism here bears obvious implications.

¹²⁰⁵ Most who escaped prison did so through the guards’ negligence or collusion (Plutarch, *Demosth.* 26.2); in capital cases, Romans could execute such guards (Petronius, *Sat.* 112; *Cod. Justin.* 9.4.4). Agrippa’s penalty here probably reflects his Roman experience (with Barrett, *Acts*, 588).

Agrippa (not Peter, *pace* NRSV) travels to Caesarea (12:19; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.343), where he had access to another of his grandfather’s palaces (cf. 23:35; 24:23). This location fits a series of contrasts with Peter.

Herod Agrippa I	Simon Peter
Travels from Jerusalem to Caesarea (12:19)	Travels from Caesarea back to Jerusalem (11:2)
Herod kills others (12:2–6, 19)	Peter is prepared to die and brings others the message of life (3:15; 5:20; 11:18)
Herod treats gentiles arrogantly (12:20–21), reluctant to share food with them (12:20)	Peter treats gentiles humbly (10:25–28, 46–48), even eating with them (11:3; cf. 10:23, 48)
Herod accepts pagan worship in Caesarea (12:22–23)	Peter rejects pagan worship in Caesarea (10:25–26)
The Lord’s angel strikes Herod dead (12:23)	The Lord’s angel strikes Peter awake, delivering him alive from Herod (12:7)

Caesarea was ideal for a meeting about trade, not only because it was more accessible to Tyre and Sidon but also because of its massive harbor and role in trade.¹²⁰⁶

The events of 12:21–23 happened in 44 CE during spectacles honoring the emperor (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.343), thus on either March 5 or August 1.¹²⁰⁷ Phoenicia engaged heavily in international trade (especially glass and purple dye) but depended on other lands for food. Agrippa acts arrogantly toward the delegates of the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon;¹²⁰⁸ his embargo had choked Phoenicia into seeking terms for a trade agreement, perhaps early in the promised famine (Acts 11:28–30). Meanwhile, God was working there (11:19; 15:3; 21:2–3, 7; 27:3; Luke 6:17; cf. 4:26; 10:13–14).

Subsequent readers have long compared Josephus’s account of Agrippa’s death, considering Acts 12 close enough to corroborate the substance of both (e.g., Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.10.10; Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 27).

¹²⁰⁶ Some of the two breakwaters’ blocks were over 50 tons; they ran 1,500 feet into the sea. Archaeologists have also discovered a hundred Herodian storage vaults along the coast (McRay, *Archaeology*, 140).

¹²⁰⁷ Barrett, *Acts*, 592; Witherington, *Acts*, 385, 389.

¹²⁰⁸ Many Jews lived in these predominantly gentile cities (*War* 2.478–79; *Ant.* 17.324).

Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 19.343–50	Acts 12:22–23
Agrippa was in Caesarea (19.343)	Agrippa was in Caesarea (12:19)
Games in theater in honor of Caesar; no mention of embassy (19.343–44)	Mention of embassy, without detailing the setting, but the theater is presupposed, since the citizen body of Caesarea is present (12:22) ¹²⁰⁹
Agrippa's glorious robe as a cause for praise (19.344)	Agrippa's royal apparel (though without details that explain its mention; 12:21)
No mention of Agrippa's speech before he is struck, but Josephus constructs a rhetorically apt one for him afterward (19.347)	Agrippa is speaking when he is praised (12:21)
Flatterers acclaim Agrippa as divine (19.344–45) ¹²¹⁰	Flatterers acclaim Agrippa as divine (12:22)
Agrippa struck just afterward (19.346–48)	Agrippa struck just afterward (12:23)
Because he did not rebuke the acclamation (19.346–47)	Because he did not defer the glory to God (12:23)
He suffered stomach pains for five days (19.348–50)	He was eaten by worms (12:23) ¹²¹¹
He died (19.350)	He died (12:23) ¹²¹²

Most differences involve omissions or perspectives, not factual contradictions; Josephus's account, for example, is more rhetorically embellished.¹²¹³ Luke condenses a source here that is independent of Josephus,¹²¹⁴ perhaps learned in Phoenicia or Caesarea (21:3, 8–10; 27:3).

¹²⁰⁹ The *dêmos* (NRSV “the people”) was the citizen body (as in 17:5; 19:30, 33). On Caesarea's theater, see Z. Weiss, “Buildings for Mass Entertainment: Tradition and Innovation in Herodian Construction,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 77 (2, June 2014): 98–107 (100–3).

¹²¹⁰ They also plead for mercy (“be propitious to us,” 19.345, LCL 9:378), which might fit Luke's context of at least the embassy (Acts 12:20).

¹²¹¹ Together with Josephus, this could suggest intestinal worms (e.g., tapeworms from infected meat, which can grow to over 30 feet); for ancient knowledge, see, e.g., Hippocrates, *Epid.* 2.1.3; 4.10; 6.1.11; *Prorr.* 1.138; 2.28. Historians were not obligated to report gaps of several days even when they knew about them (cf. Luke 24:36–53 with Acts 1:3; Justin, *Epit.* 6.8.10–13 with 6.8.1).

¹²¹² Luke's term for Agrippa expiring may link him with judgments in 5:5, 10; Judg 4:21.

¹²¹³ As a hellenistic historian, Josephus plays down direct divine elements more than Luke, and probably adds the bird as an omen (*Ant.* 19.346; cf. 18.195; Justin, *Epit.* 23.4.10–11); Luke compresses the five days of Agrippa's suffering (19.350), if he knows about them (cf. Acts 9:23; 20:2–3).

¹²¹⁴ See Barrett, *Acts*, 589, noting Josephus's nonmention, and Luke's nonexplanation, of Blastus. Each version potentially supplements the other by highlighting different details.

Luke does not explain Agrippa's donned royal apparel (12:21), but Josephus notes that it was made of silver, which in the sunlight generated such awe that his flatterers praised him as divine (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.344–45). Luke might include the robes, condensed from his source, to recall an earlier contrast between another Herod's royal pomp and a martyred prophet's simplicity (Luke 7:25).

Whereas Agrippa's audience praises his voice as divine (Acts 12:22), Luke's audience knows that the real divine voice endorses instead Jesus and his movement (9:4; 10:13, 15; 11:7, 9; Luke 3:22; 9:35–36). Voice intonation¹²¹⁵ and other aspects of delivery¹²¹⁶ were essential elements of ancient rhetoric, in which Agrippa undoubtedly had ample training. Applause and sycophantic acclamations regularly greeted rulers' speeches, and on other occasions some people praised orators' speech as divine.¹²¹⁷ Like most flattery, this flattery is insincere (gentile Caesaraeans soon celebrated Agrippa's death).¹²¹⁸

Everyone but the emperor was expected to deflect such praise (*SB* 3924); even gentiles felt the hubris of accepting divine honor merited judgment.¹²¹⁹ But ironically, the nationalistic king who was eager to please Judeans (Acts 12:3) now welcomes worship from gentiles. Although Agrippa earlier dissuaded Gaius Caligula from installing his image in Jerusalem's temple,¹²²⁰ Caligula's divine claims¹²²¹ may have influenced his own sense of royal privilege. Agrippa here resembles kings in the OT who exalted themselves as divine before God overthrew them (Isa 14:13–15; Ezek 28:2–10).¹²²²

¹²¹⁵ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 11; *Demosth.* 54; *Rhet. Her.* 3.11.19–20; Cicero, *Brut.* 43.158; 55.203; 66.234; 91.316; T. H. Olbricht, "Delivery and Memory," pages 159–67 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 161.

¹²¹⁶ E.g., Cicero, *Brut.* 82.283; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 7.2; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.3.9; 2.19.2–4, 6; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.25.537–38. For flattering rulers' divinity, cf. instructions in Menander Rhetor 2.1, 369.5–7; 2.1–2, 370.21–371.2.

¹²¹⁷ See, e.g., Cicero, *De or.* 1.10.40; 1.38.172; *Or. Brut.* 19.62; Suetonius, *Nero* 21.1.

¹²¹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 19.356–58; cf. an early analogy in Plutarch, *Demosth.* 22.3; celebration of tyrants' deaths in Suetonius, *Tib.* 75.1; *Nero* 57.1. Alexandrian flattery deceptively persuaded Agrippa's earlier royal patron Caligula that the Alexandrians really thought him a god (Philo, *Embassy* 164).

¹²¹⁹ Apollodorus, *Bib.* 1.9.7; Lucian, *Men.* 12; Maximus of Tyre 29.4; 35.2; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.1.96–97.

¹²²⁰ Philo, *Embassy* 276–329; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.297–98.

¹²²¹ See Josephus, *Ant.* 18.256–309; 19.4, 11. Luke's approach: render taxes to Caesar, but worship only to God (Luke 20:25).

¹²²² The angel striking Agrippa recalls 2 Kgs 19:35 LXX (which employs the same term), an event recalled also in 1 Macc 7:41; Sir 48:21.

Thus, the Lord's angel who struck Peter to deliver him (12:7) now strikes Agrippa to slay him (12:23). People deemed painful deaths from worms and/or bowel diseases an appropriate, horrible end for tyrants,¹²²³ most notably the self-deified, tyrannical persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc 9:5–13).¹²²⁴

Here, as with some other sections (9:31), Luke prefers to end on a positive summary note (12:24). Herod's death ends his persecution, just as Paul's conversion earlier ended his (9:31). That the message or the church "grew and multiplied" reflects a Lukan summary motif (cf. 6:1, 7; 9:31; 19:20), probably echoing the OT (7:17).¹²²⁵ Just as Pharaoh's oppression of Israel caused Israel to multiply still more (Exod 1:12, 16–20; *Jub.* 46:15), so Agrippa's oppression led to the church's increase. The warning that all would suffer persecution in time (Luke 21:12–19, esp. 21:17; cf. Acts 14:22) would invite Luke's audience to find encouragement in this conclusion. In the end, nothing could stop God's message (cf. 5:39; 6:7; 19:20; 28:31).¹²²⁶

12:25–13:3: CONSECRATED FOR THE NEW MISSION

Luke turns to Paul's Diaspora missions in 12:25–19:41. Although he has oscillated between Paul and others for several chapters (7:58–12:25), Luke will now follow Paul's career through the end of the book. The texture of the narrative changes here: more often Luke's sources appear more detailed in this part of Acts (esp. 16:10–16; 20:5–28:16, where "we" often appears). Moreover, the rest of the book is in territory more geographically familiar to himself and his audience. Although the play between heritage and mission continues throughout the book, this second "half" of Acts focuses on mission, exemplified in Paul's calling (9:15–16). When Barnabas leaves on another valid mission, Luke continues to follow Paul's story (15:39–40).

¹²²³ Herodotus 4.205; Plutarch, *Sulla* 36.2–4; 2 Chron 21:15–19; Josephus, *Ant.* 9.103; 17.167–69; (for a governor) *War* 7.439–53; or death from a fit of rage (Valerius Maximus 9.3.8; cf. terror and the Lord striking in 1 Sam 25:37–38). Everyone recognized intestinal diseases and worms as particularly agonizing (Cicero, *Fin.* 2.30.96; *b. Erub.* 41b).

¹²²⁴ See further Allen, *Death*, 35–65. Cf. the connection with Judas's bowel-bursting end (Acts 1:18) and other retribution in Allen, *Death*, 120–29.

¹²²⁵ See Gen 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4; Exod 1:7, 10, 20; Deut 1:10; 7:13.

¹²²⁶ Ray, *Irony*, 59, notes as irony the contrast between the persecutor's death and the word's continuing spread.

Despite some use of Scripture (esp. in 13:17–47), Luke here presupposes more Greco-Roman cultural literacy than in earlier chapters. For example:

- The Phrygian Baucis and Philemon story, near Phrygia (14:11–12)
- Possibly the Trojan War and Alexander of Macedon (16:8–10)
- The Delphic cult of Apollo (16:16)
- Socrates’s hearing before the Areopagus (17:18–19)
- Two quotations from Greek poets (17:28)
- The famous Ephesian Artemis cult (19:24–27)
- Kicking against the goads (26:14)
- The Dioscuri (28:11)

At least the outline and substance of Luke’s narrative follows genuine information. For example, Paul’s letters confirm most of his companions and most locations in his ministry itinerary (cf. Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 10:14–16).¹²²⁷ He did not evangelize some other major centers such as Alexandria or Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, but given his ministry in Ephesus and Corinth, no one would invent ministry in such out of the way towns as in Acts 13:14–14:20; cf. 14:21; 16:2; 2 Tim 3:11).¹²²⁸ Ancient novelists would not have bothered to research Luke’s correct details regarding the Anatolian interior.

Acts 12:25–14:28 address Paul’s and Barnabas’s ministry in Cyprus and Phrygia. Antioch appears as the home base for both the benevolent mission to Jerusalem (11:30; 12:25) and the evangelistic mission in 13:4–14:25 (13:1–3; 14:26–28). Departure from and return to Antioch (13:3; 14:26) plus prayer and fasting (13:3; 14:23) and commissioning (13:2–3; 14:26) provide a conspicuous, unifying frame for this mission journey. Within this frame, Paul’s “to the Jew first” (Rom 1:16) ideal recurs.¹²²⁹

- From Antioch (13:1–3)
 - A To Jews (13:4–5)
 - B To gentiles (13:6–12)
 - A’ To Jews (13:13–43)
 - B’ To gentiles (13:44–52)¹²³⁰

¹²²⁷ See T. H. Campbell, “Journeys.”

¹²²⁸ Cf. Hemer, *Acts in History*, 184; G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 165.

¹²²⁹ Adapting only slightly Talbert, *Acts*, 116.

¹²³⁰ Gentiles do appear in 13:43, and Jews appear in 13:45, 50 (though not as objects of positive good news).

A” To Jews (and gentiles; 14:1–7)

B” To gentiles (14:8–18, 19–23)

- To Antioch (14:24–28)

The ministry of Paul and Barnabas opens with a reaffirmation of the calling (13:2–3); a dramatic power encounter and official’s conversion (demonstrating that God is genuinely with this new mission team, 13:4–12); a speech connecting biblical history to the present gospel, and a typical (somewhat paradigmatic) mission scene providing theological explanation for targeting gentiles, with attendant conflicts (13:13–52).

A Closer Look: Paul’s Mission in Acts 12:25–19:41

Luke’s attention to Paul might at first seem odd. Ministry to Israel found fertile soil, hearers with sufficient familiarity with Scripture and foundational background, that it grew rapidly to massive numbers, especially in Jerusalem’s megachurch (21:20). Paul, by contrast, started what we might call home Bible study groups across the Roman Empire, usually traveling further from his home base than the Twelve and having to adapt his presentation cross-culturally to audiences that often lacked grounding in the Jewish Scriptures.¹²³¹ Only a tiny minority of people in the Diaspora were monotheists; far from expressing a dominant culture’s imperialism, Paul’s mission expressed bold – from an outsider’s perspective, even foolhardy – faith.

Moreover, not until 19:11–12 do we hear of Paul’s signs on the same level as with the Jerusalem apostles in 5:15–16, and from a human perspective Paul seems to flounder initially when, without Barnabas, he presses into unevangelized territory (16:6–9). He could not in any case command the respect the church accorded the Twelve, who were known to have followed Jesus’s earthly ministry.

Yet the future of the Jesus movement lay especially with the Diaspora mission that Paul’s ministry embodied and nurtured; Jesus had warned that Jerusalem’s days were numbered (Luke 21:20–24). For Luke, Paul exemplifies the model for the gentile mission that is Luke’s focus (Acts 1:8).¹²³² ****

¹²³¹ As A. A. Just, *Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 28, notes: “with the beginning of the Gentile mission (Acts 13–28), there are no longer any reports of fantastic numbers of quick converts.”

¹²³² C. B. Puskas, “The Conclusion of Luke-Acts: An Investigation of the Literary Function and Theological Significance of Acts 28:16–31” (PhD dissertation, St. Louis University,

In 12:25–13:3, Barnabas and Saul are consecrated for the new mission. Like the Seven (6:3), Barnabas and Saul fulfilled “social” ministry for the needy of the Jerusalem church (11:30; 12:25) before embarking on ministries reproducing more dramatic elements of the apostolic example. Now they are ready for their apostolic mission beyond where the church has already been established.

As the high priest once commissioned Saul to stop the spread of the Christian movement (9:1–2; 22:5; 26:10), here the Spirit sends him forth to spread it (13:2–4). He had once inadvertently spread the church by participating in scattering its laborers (8:1, 3–4), but now as a laborer himself he spreads it deliberately, and among the very gentiles whose influence he may have once regarded as a threat.¹²³³ Although Paul has been proclaiming and teaching about Christ (9:20–22, 25, 28–29; 11:26; 13:1; 26:20), it is only at this juncture that he will begin to enter on the wider ministry to which the Lord called him in 9:15 (also 22:14–15; 26:16–18).

Acts 13:1 resembles other leadership lists (cf. 1:13; 6:5; Luke 6:13–16), here with the names of Barnabas and Saul framing the list.¹²³⁴ These leaders who help confirm Barnabas’s and Saul’s mission are prophets and teachers. Although some leaders may have been stronger in prophecy and some in teaching, the grammar probably does not force the strong distinction that some scholars envision; probably all taught but also were prophetically gifted (2:17–18).¹²³⁵

Their geographically diverse background also serves well cosmopolitan Antioch’s church, which God uses foundationally in the culturally diverse gentile mission (cf. 20:4). Their social and educational status were probably high (besides 13:1, cf. 4:36–37; 6:3; 22:3; 1 Tim 3:2, 7; Tit 1:6). Saul was a Tarsian Roman citizen, and Barnabas a Cypriote Levite.

Like “John” (12:25), “Simeon” was a common Jewish name (cf. 15:14; Luke 2:25; 3:30) inviting a second name to distinguish him from others (Luke 6:15; 22:3; Acts 1:23). Although Niger was a highly respectable name

1980), 154; cf. M.-E. Rosenblatt, *Paul the Accused: His Portrait in the Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994); see further comment in introduction.

¹²³³ On that idea, see Keener, *Galatians* (Cambridge, 2018), 49–52.

¹²³⁴ For collaborative leadership in Acts, see, e.g., 1:21–26; 2:14; 6:3–5; 13:1; 14:23; esp. Jerusalem’s “apostles and elders” (15:2–6). In Paul, D. J. Harrington, “The Collaborative Nature of the Pauline Mission,” *BibT* 42 (4, 2004): 201–6; K. Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (LNTS 325; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 46–53, 61–62.

¹²³⁵ Both sorts of gifts coexisted in early Christianity (cf. Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:28; *Didache* 15.1–2). Synagogues included teaching but not prophecy.

among Roman citizens (cf. comment on 13:9),¹²³⁶ it could also be a nickname, in which case it means something like “Simeon the Black” or “Simeon the Dark.” Given Luke’s concern for diversity (and Africa, cf. 8:26–40), the Cyrenian origin of many of the church’s founders (11:20), and the following mention of Lucius from Cyrene, many scholars think that Simeon may have been a Jew descended from North African proselytes.¹²³⁷

Lucius should not be identified with other NT figures with similar names; Lucius was among the most common Roman names, and this Lucius was probably one of the leading Cyrenian Jewish founders of the Antioch church (11:20). Cyrene was in North Africa, and had an exceptionally large Jewish population in this period.¹²³⁸

The relation of Manaen (the LXX form of Menahem) to Herod Antipas would interest Luke’s audience,¹²³⁹ though Antipas had been exiled since 39 CE. If he was literally brought up with Herod (as the Greek term often implies), he was his childhood playmate, probably from the aristocracy, and now probably in his mid-sixties.

Apart from preparation for mystery initiations, religious fasting was rarer among Greeks and especially Romans, but it was common for pious Jews (Luke 2:37; 5:33; 18:12)¹²⁴⁰ and modeled most fully by Jesus (4:2) for his followers (cf. 5:35; Acts 14:23).

Since Luke has already mentioned that the leaders are (or at the least include) prophets, he does not need to explain how *the Holy Spirit said* (13:2).¹²⁴¹ The Spirit authored this mission (1:8; 2:17–18) and continues to encourage and direct it (13:9; 15:28; 16:6–7; 20:22–23). As elsewhere in Luke-Acts, prayer precedes the mission of laborers (Acts 6:6; 14:23; Luke 6:12–13; 10:2–3),¹²⁴² and further prophecies may have accompanied the

¹²³⁶ In this case it raises the probability of dark complexion only slightly; see F. M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 12–13.

¹²³⁷ E.g., Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:17; C. H. Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 47–48. Northern Mediterranean peoples could apply the term “black” in a relative manner for North Africans (e.g., Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 154–55; Silius Italicus 7.682–83; Lucian, *Ship* 2), not only for Aithiopians (on which see Acts 8:27).

¹²³⁸ E.g., Josephus, *War* 7.437; *Ant.* 14.115; *Ag. Ap.* 2.44; see esp. Applebaum, *Cyrene*.

¹²³⁹ Manaen and Joanna (Luke 8:3) may provide ultimate sources for some of Luke’s special Herodian information (esp. Luke 23:7–12).

¹²⁴⁰ For prayer, see, e.g., 2 Macc 13:12; Bar 1:5; Tob 12:8; Jdt 4:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.290; 20.89; *Life* 290; among Christians, e.g., *Did.* 1.3; *Pol. Phil.* 7.2; 2 *Clem.* 16.4; Irenaeus, *Her.* 2.31.2

¹²⁴¹ For the frequent association of the Spirit with prophecy, see esp. Menzies, *Empowered*, 49–101; Menzies, *Development*, 53–112.

¹²⁴² Cf. also Matson, *Conversion Narratives*, 51–52.

commissioning (cf. 1 Tim 4:14). *Sent them off* (13:3; cf. 15:3) probably includes fare and some provisions (cf. Rom 15:24; 2 Cor 1:16).

Bridging Horizons: Outreach

An increasingly multicultural church in cosmopolitan Antioch invites a multicultural leadership team.¹²⁴³ While all the top leaders are Jewish – those most competent to teach Scripture at this stage – they are also culturally versatile.

The entire leadership of the church shares in prayer and prophetic support for the mission of Barnabas and Saul. The Antioch church's vision is not simply for their own outreach in Antioch, but for God's larger purposes in his world. Sometimes even ministries that seem smaller in the short run have a greater strategic impact in the long run. ****

13:4–12: MISSION IN CYPRUS

The Spirit sent them (13:4) through the guidance of prayerful prophetic peers (13:1–3), but the specific initial destination was probably directed partly by common sense. Because Barnabas was from Cyprus (4:36), the new mission team undoubtedly can begin with some sort of connections there. Cyprus was also just 60 miles from wealthy, fortified Seleucia, Antioch's port city 15 miles WSW of Antioch.

This mission of Paul and Barnabas goes beyond previous ministry to gentiles by its deliberate nature.¹²⁴⁴ It initially appears smaller than Paul's dramatic calling (9:15) might imply, preaching from one place to another. Paul and Barnabas could persist, however, through faith in Christ's calling. This new mission further exemplifies Luke's emphasis on the Spirit's power for mission (13:2, 4, 9). Although Luke's information is sparser here (perhaps because Paul did not revisit Cyprus later in ministry), Luke focuses especially on a highly placed Roman convert (13:12) who presages the direction of Luke's narrative (19:21; 23:11; 28:14).

¹²⁴³ Many scholars today emphasize this point (e.g., C. P. DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 27–28; N. E. Thomas, "The Church at Antioch: Crossing Racial, Cultural, and Class Barriers, Acts 11:19–30; 13:1–3," pages 144–56 in *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context* [ed. R. L. Gallagher and P. Hertig; AmSocMissS 34; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004], 152).

¹²⁴⁴ Cf. E. Best, "Acts xiii.1–3," *JTS* 11 (2, 1960): 344–48.

A Closer Look: Travel in Antiquity

Travel was often difficult and dangerous,¹²⁴⁵ as Paul's own experiences illustrate (2 Cor 11:26); most people avoided travel when possible.¹²⁴⁶ Paul's travels in Acts alone covered at least "12,000 miles (20,000 kilometers)," not including later travels claimed by early Christian tradition.¹²⁴⁷ Such travel was time-consuming (cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.8.6).

People of means might travel by donkey, carriage (cf. 8:28), or (especially for rapid journeys) horse.¹²⁴⁸ Paul and Barnabas would have traveled most of the way by foot, necessitated at least by their frequent use of ships, which would have forced them to leave travel animals behind. In ideal weather and without intervening stops ships could travel even 100 miles in a day, much faster than land travel, which averaged 20 miles per day. Passengers booked passage on freight ships' decks, bringing their own food. Traveling merchants often spread particular cults, and traveling teachers also promoted philosophic ideals or sought honor or income by teaching.¹²⁴⁹ ****

With up to a hundred and fifty thousand residents,¹²⁵⁰ Salamis (13:5) was Cyprus's main port city, and the one nearest Syria. Multiple synagogues (13:5)¹²⁵¹ are not surprising, since many Jews lived there (Philo, *Embassy* 282; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.284).¹²⁵² Although special meetings could occur at these community centers on other days (e.g., Josephus, *Life* 277–79), the largest crowds gathered on the Sabbath.¹²⁵³ Diaspora Jews were diverse,

¹²⁴⁵ On travel, see M. P. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* (2nd rev. ed.; New York: Cooper Square, 1970); L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974); R. Wallace and W. Williams, *The Three Worlds of Paul of Tarsus* (London: Routledge, 1998), 15–29.

¹²⁴⁶ MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 97.

¹²⁴⁷ Finegan, *Apostles*, xix, noting that these would add a further "3,000 miles (5,000 kilometers) or more."

¹²⁴⁸ Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 38.

¹²⁴⁹ Cf., e.g., W. L. Liefeld, "The Wandering Preacher as a Social Figure in the Roman Empire" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1967).

¹²⁵⁰ Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 342, 344.

¹²⁵¹ For Luke's phrase, "synagogue[s] of the Jews" (13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10), cf. *CIJ* 1:495, §683; 1:497, §684; otherwise gentiles could apply the phrase to any gathering.

¹²⁵² About seventy years after this mission, gentiles slaughtered the Jewish community there after a Jewish revolt (Stern, "Diaspora," 155).

¹²⁵³ Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.12; *Embassy* 156; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.258. Many urban gentiles were familiar with Jewish Sabbaths (Suetonius, *Tib.* 32.2), though often misunderstanding them (Strabo 16.2.40; Martial, *Epig.* 4.4.7; Suetonius, *Aug.* 76.2).

with their urban elite embracing many aspects of Greek culture, but they generally envisioned themselves as faithful Judeans living abroad.¹²⁵⁴

Some scholars question Luke's portrait of Paul repeatedly starting in synagogues (e.g., 9:20; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). Yet Paul probably did so both for salvation-historical reasons (3:26; 13:46; 28:26–28) and because shared background (cf. Rom 3:2) facilitated communication there. Although Paul focused on gentiles (Rom 1:5, 13–15; 11:13; Gal 1:16; 2:7–9; 15:16–20), he cared for his people (Rom 9:1–5; 10:1), began with Jews (Rom 1:16; 2:9–10; 15:19), sought both gentiles and Jews (Rom 11:14; 1 Cor 9:20–22), and clearly was active in synagogues (2 Cor 11:24), where he could also find gentiles attracted to monotheism.¹²⁵⁵

Mark may have served Barnabas and Paul as something like a disciple/apprentice, following biblical models for prophets-in-training (Num 11:28; 1 Kgs 19:21; 2 Kgs 3:11; 4:12; 6:15).¹²⁵⁶ Luke must mention his presence in Acts 13:5 and departure in 13:13 to help explain the later rift between Paul and Barnabas (15:36–39).

The team probably evangelized along the 115-mile long, relatively recent southern-coast road from Salamis to Paphos, in such cities as Citium, Amathus, and Curium. New Paphos, Cyprus's Roman capital, sported a harbor and magnificent temples (Strabo 14.6.3);¹²⁵⁷ it was about 15–20 kilometers northwest of Old Paphos, famous for its cult of Aphrodite.¹²⁵⁸

The name of only roughly one in six proconsuls of Cyprus has survived, but Luke is likely accurate about Sergius Paulus and Bar-Jesus Elymas.¹²⁵⁹ Given the rareness of the name, this may be the Lucius Sergius Paullus who was at one point a senator under Claudius and later a consul in Rome; this

¹²⁵⁴ See further E. S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Safrai, "Relations."

¹²⁵⁵ Synagogues also provided traveling Jews "accommodation and food" (*NewDocs* 7, pp. 89–90, §4). Gal 2:7–9 addresses primary spheres but does not bar Paul from reaching Jews (see Keener, *Galatians* [Cambridge, 2018], 77; idem, *Galatians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019], 131–32); cf. Rom 15:19, 25–31.

¹²⁵⁶ Cf. also CD 8.20–21; *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–153; also among sages, e.g., Musonius Rufus 11, p. 84.9–14.

¹²⁵⁷ Most prominently Paphian Aphrodite (Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2–4; *Ann.* 3.62; Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 45.20–22; Pausanias 1.14.7; Lucian, *Sacr.* 10; *Gout* 87–88; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.58).

¹²⁵⁸ Strabo 14.6.3; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.97.210; cf. Homer, *Od.* 8.362–63.

¹²⁵⁹ Cf., e.g., Lüdemann, *Christianity*, 151; S. Al-Suadi, "Magie und Apokalyptik im Zentrum lukanischer Geschichtsschreibung-Historizität am Beispiel von Apg 13.6–12," *NTS* 61 (4, 2015): 482–504. By Luke's day Sergius Paulus apparently had even become a consul in Rome, so fabricating his background would prove dangerous.

could be a relative, but it is the right stage in his career to be governor.¹²⁶⁰ Certainly the family of Sergius Paulus hails from the remote region that Paul visits next, suggesting the likelihood of a referral.¹²⁶¹

Provincial governors, like other Roman patrons, received early morning guests who came to pay respects (Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.3),¹²⁶² and Sergius Paulus, from the east himself, already had Jewish interests (Acts 13:6).¹²⁶³ We know about other high-status Cypriote Jewish magicians in this period (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.142–44). Many gentiles respected Jewish magic, from which Luke repeatedly distinguishes God’s servants (8:9–13; 13:6; 19:13–15).¹²⁶⁴ As here, advisors might seek to turn a ruler’s attention away from potential rivals.¹²⁶⁵ Luke uses elsewhere his term for Elymas’s resistance (13:8) only twice, both showing that opponents cannot stop the gospel (6:10; Luke 21:15).

Whereas Luke has repeatedly spoken of Barnabas and Saul, from here forward Paul is named first (see 13:13). Ministering in a gentile context respectful toward Rome, Saul now begins going by his Roman name (13:9). Double (and even triple) names are widely attested; in addition to their threefold Roman name, Roman citizens (16:37) could have local names that sounded (as here)¹²⁶⁶ or meant something similar. “Paul” was rare for non-Romans, and extremely rare among Jews;¹²⁶⁷ it is normally a cognomen used almost exclusively by Roman citizens. The graphic coincidence of the apostle’s and governor’s names reinforces for readers the Romanness of Paul’s name.

Paul attributes Elymas’s power to Satan (13:9),¹²⁶⁸ and demonstrates God’s superior power (on such power conflicts, see comment on 8:9–11). As Elymas tried to “twist” the proconsul from the faith (13:8), in 13:10 he

¹²⁶⁰ Levick, *Colonies*, 112; A. Nobbs, “Cyprus,” pages 279–89 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 284–87; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:6; Schnabel, *Mission*, 1084–86. See *CIL* 6.253; 6.31545.3 = *ILS* 2.5926.

¹²⁶¹ Nobbs, “Cyprus,” 287; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:6–7.

¹²⁶² For description of the probable site of the governor’s palace, see Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 354–57.

¹²⁶³ Officials sometimes consulted diviners (esp. astrologers) or even kept them on staff (e.g., Suetonius, *Tib.* 14.4; *Cal.* 19.3; *Nero* 36.1; *Otho* 4.1; 6.1). Magicians (Acts 13:6, Gr. *magos*) were typically adept in astrology (e.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.81.6; 2.31.8; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.553–564; *Sib. Or.* 3.227).

¹²⁶⁴ Balaam became a Jewish prototype for false prophets (4Q339 f1.1–2; *Sipre Deut.* 357.18.2).

¹²⁶⁵ Eunapius, *Lives* 466.

¹²⁶⁶ *Saulos* (the Greek form Hellenists would use, vs. the Semitic *Shaul*) and *Paulus*.

¹²⁶⁷ Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 8–9; R. Bauckham, “Paul and Other Jews with Latin Names in the New Testament,” pages 202–20 in *Paul, Luke, and the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. A. Christophersen et al.; JSNTSup 217; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 207.

¹²⁶⁸ For association of magic with spirits, see, e.g., *Jub.* 48:9; *1 En.* 65:6; *LAB* 34:2–3; *PGM* 1.80–81, 88–90, 164–66, 181–85, 252–53; 2.52–54.

“twists” the Lord’s ways (both using the same Greek verb). Whereas the true prophet John prepared and straightened the Lord’s “way” (Luke 1:76; 3:4–5), the false prophet Elymas makes the straight ways crooked (Acts 13:10)! Luke’s audience would understand pronouncements of judgment (cf. 5:9; 1 Kgs 13:4; 2 Kgs 1:10–12), but the temporary nature of the blindness here allows for repentance (as in Acts 9:8, 18; 2 Kgs 6:18). This spiritually blind guide (Luke 6:39–42) now needs another to lead him (Acts 13:11), as had Paul (9:8; 22:11).¹²⁶⁹ Such signs help fulfill and vindicate the gentile mission (15:12).

Scholars note some ironies in the passage.¹²⁷⁰

Elymas	Saul
A “false prophet” (13:6)	A true prophet (13:1)
Elymas has two names (13:6, 8), one that provides a wordplay (Bar [“son of”] Jesus becomes instead son of the devil; 13:10)	Saul has two names (13:9), one of which provides a connection with Sergius Paulus (13:7)
Elymas twists the Lord’s straight “ways” (13:10)	Saul once opposed the “way” (9:2); now he preaches it (16:17)
Blinded and sought someone to lead him by the hand (13:11)	Earlier blinded and led by the hand (9:8)
Full of all deception (13:10)	Filled with the Holy Spirit (13:9)

In 13:12, Sergius Paulus is astonished at the teaching, evoking the same phrase in Luke 4:32, where it also responds to authority against the demonic (4:32–36). He believes (13:12), illustrating Luke’s principle that status need not preclude faith (17:12, 34; 18:8).¹²⁷¹ Whether his faith was exclusively Christian or he persevered (Luke 8:12–15) is uncertain; if he later became consul, he must have kept his faith private (cf. 2 Kgs 5:18–19).

¹²⁶⁹ For guides for the blind, see, e.g., Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 444; *Oed. Col.* 199–201; *Antig.* 989–90.

¹²⁷⁰ See Tannehill, *Acts*, 162–63; Johnson, *Acts*, 227.

¹²⁷¹ The respect of a high official provided propaganda value for apologetic historians (e.g., Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.45–47).

13:13–15: JOURNEY AND SETTING

Although I treat smaller units here to keep the commentary user-friendly, the section 13:13–52 is a literary unity.¹²⁷² Early in his depictions of Paul's ministry, Luke provides a typical (somewhat paradigmatic) mission scene, providing salvation-historical justification for preaching also to the gentiles, and revealing the conflicts attending the mission. This is Acts' first lengthy speech for Paul, and it connects earlier biblical history to the present gospel, just as Luke does in the broader schema of his two-volume work.

After a stint in Barnabas's homeland of Cyprus, a trip to Paul's Cilicia might have made sense, unless he had made himself unwelcome in some synagogues there (9:30; but cf. later 15:41).¹²⁷³ But Paphos (13:6) was closer to Pamphylia (13:13).¹²⁷⁴ Further, Sergius Paullus (the Latin spelling) may have provided a letter of recommendation for persons of status in the region, where many of his relatives lived.¹²⁷⁵ Whereas the well-populated southern coast of Asia Minor was a common destination, it did not require a trip to the less populated interior such as Pisidian Antioch.

A ship from Paphos would first reach the Pamphylian seaport Attalia (cf. 14:25). From there they might take a smaller boat some 8 miles north on the Cestrus River to Perga's river port (Strabo 14.4.2), then walk 5 miles to Perga. Perhaps likelier, they simply walked the roughly 10 miles inland to Perga. Perga (Acts 13:13), with a population of perhaps a hundred thousand (its theater seated perhaps fifteen thousand), was one of Pamphylia's five chief cities. By contrast, their destination of Pisidian Antioch (13:14) was significant only by the standards of Anatolia's interior. This Antioch was actually in Phrygia, bordering Pisidia, but it obtained the title Pisidian Antioch to distinguish it from another Antioch in Phrygia¹²⁷⁶ (rulers named Antiochus had many cities named for them). Pisidian Antioch was also a long walk from Perga: probably they traveled the half-century-old Via Sebaste, through Comama, mostly uphill for over 100 miles.

¹²⁷² See R. F. O'Toole, "Christ's Resurrection in Acts 13,13–52," *Bib* 60 (3, 1979): 361–72, for discussion of the structure.

¹²⁷³ For a time after 67 BCE, Rome had even administered Cyprus as part of its province of Cilicia.

¹²⁷⁴ For likely earlier converts from there, cf. 2:10, but it is not clear that they returned.

¹²⁷⁵ Nobbs, "Cyprus," 287. Luke may have reason to omit the connection in retrospect and Paul would be expected to start in a synagogue in any case.

¹²⁷⁶ Cf. Strabo 12.3.31; 12.6.4. Because of its title even Pliny wrongly assumed it was part of Pisidia in his day (*N.H.* 5.24.94).

Pisidian Antioch was about 3,600 feet above sea level; less densely populated than coastal cities, it was nevertheless South Galatia's most prominent city.¹²⁷⁷ The largest of the four Roman colonies in the region, its residents included more than 5,750 Roman citizen colonists.¹²⁷⁸ Still, Cremna, the second largest, was much closer to Perga; why did they walk all the way to Antioch? Escaping heat or lowland malaria is one suggestion; Sergius Paulus's connections in the area is another.¹²⁷⁹ Once one entered the interior anyway, however, Antioch lay on the Via Sebaste, the route necessary for ministry elsewhere in the mountainous interior.

The size of the Jewish community is unclear, but Jewish presence in Phrygia and South Galatia is well-attested.¹²⁸⁰ Although lectionary schedules are probably later, especially in the Diaspora, Scripture reading was common in first-century synagogues (13:15, 27; 15:21).¹²⁸¹ If later sources for synagogues are relevant, leaders (13:15), readers, translators, and teachers might be located on a dais along with the Scripture scrolls.¹²⁸² The arrival of Jewish visitors in town with Judean roots would prompt inquiry, and the synagogue leaders (13:15)¹²⁸³ would consider someone with Paul's Jerusalem training (22:3) an exceptional potential guest speaker. They may have also welcomed Barnabas as a Levite (4:36), and he may have deferred to Paul as a better speaker (14:12).¹²⁸⁴ The requested *word of exhortation* (13:15) probably includes comments on the just-completed Scripture reading;¹²⁸⁵ it will be a *message of salvation* (13:26).

¹²⁷⁷ Levick, *Colonies*, 122; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:7. Antioch belonged to the province of Galatia from 25 BCE to 295 CE.

¹²⁷⁸ Levick, *Colonies*, 94; for the Italian provenance of the citizens, see Levick, *Colonies*, 66.

¹²⁷⁹ The family's estate is the region's best-attested (S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:151–52).

¹²⁸⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 12.147–53; *CIJ* 2:24–38, §§760–80; *MAMA* 6.334; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:33–36; C. Breytenbach, *Paulus und Barnabas in der Provinz Galatien* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 167–68.

¹²⁸¹ *CIJ* 2:332–35, §1404; *Good Person Free* 81–82; *Spec. Laws* 2.62; *Moses* 2.215–16; *Dreams* 2.127; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.43, 164; *Ag. Ap.* 2.175; Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 78–81; cf. also the Ezekiel scroll at Masada and the Isaiah scroll at Qumran. For the common Lukan expression *law and the prophets*, see also, e.g., 2 Macc 15:9; 4 Macc 18:10–18.

¹²⁸² See *t. Meg.* 3[4]:21; Le Cornu, *Acts*, 688–89.

¹²⁸³ The title here is widely attested, e.g., *CIJ* 1:187–88, §265; 1:297–98, §383; 1:369, §504; 1:409, §553; 1:428, §584. In the Diaspora, the title often involved especially socioeconomic patronage, sometimes (though probably not here) including gentiles. See extended discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 2:2045–47.

¹²⁸⁴ As people who could recite Torah, priests and Levites would be favored; cf. Deut 24:8; Neh 8:7–8; Ezek 44:23; Mal 2:4–9; Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.13; *m. Git.* 5:8.

¹²⁸⁵ The phrase, however, has a range of application (1 Macc 10:24; 2 Macc 15:11; Heb 13:22; 2 Bar. 81:1).

Although expositions were not mandatory in synagogue services, knowledgeable members often did offer them (*Good Man Free* 82; *Spec. Laws* 2.62), as here. Possibly first-century samples from Anatolia lack allegory, apocalyptic, and even many biblical quotations, but betray a high level of rhetoric, and reveal a Stoic “conceptual framework.”¹²⁸⁶ Exposition would be in Greek, like most readings.¹²⁸⁷ Not only the Jewish community, but most residents of Antioch spoke Greek, though the civic administration overwhelmingly preferred Latin.¹²⁸⁸

Unlike most Judean teachers (cf. Luke 4:30), speakers in the Diaspora would rise to expound.¹²⁸⁹ Paul presumably uses the *gesture* for beginning a speech (Acts 13:16), with the hand and some fingers outstretched.¹²⁹⁰

13:16B–22: PROEM AND BIBLICAL NARRATIO

Like Stephen, Paul begins with a sweep of biblical history; Paul shows that his message is not grounded solely in proof-texts, but in the pattern of God’s working throughout biblical history.

Paul’s inaugural speech here parallels Peter’s in Acts 2:14–39:¹²⁹¹

Subject	Peter’s sermon (Acts 2)	Paul’s sermon (Acts 13)
You killed Jesus	2:22–23	13:27–28
God raised him up	2:24	13:30
David says in Ps 16	2:25–28	13:35
David remains dead	2:29	13:36
God raised up Christ from David’s seed	2:30	(13:23)
Jesus did not see corruption	2:31	13:37

¹²⁸⁶ F. Siegert, “Homily and Panegyric Sermon,” pages 421–43 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 435–37.

¹²⁸⁷ For the LXX in Phrygia, see Trebilco, *Communities*, 58–84, especially 60–78.

¹²⁸⁸ Levick, *Colonies*, 134–37, 143–44; cf. 189–91.

¹²⁸⁹ E.g., Philo, *Spec. Laws* 2.62; Plutarch, *Cic.* 16.3; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.29; Pliny, *Ep.* 4.9.18; 9.13.18. Even in Judea, Pharisees were somewhat divided (*t. Ber.* 1:3; *Sipre Deut.* 34.5.3).

¹²⁹⁰ See Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 145–48, here 148; Hall, “Delivery,” 226 (citing Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.3.92).

¹²⁹¹ Goulder, *Type*, 83.

Nevertheless, this speech also contains some distinctively Pauline elements, suggesting Luke's knowledge of Paul's typical style and message,¹²⁹² such as justification by faith (13:38–39). Certainly Paul could pile up Scriptures (Rom 3:10–18; 10:18–21; 15:9–12) and summarize segments of salvation history (e.g., Rom 9:7–18) – though of course no one claims that *Paul* is writing this speech.

I would outline Paul's sermon roughly as follows:

1. *Proem* (13:16)
2. *Narratio* (narrative; 13:17–31)
3. *Propositio* (thesis; 13:32)
4. *Probatio* (proofs, from texts; 13:33–37)¹²⁹³
5. Deliberative peroration (13:38–41)

Admittedly the mention of witnesses in 13:31–32 may fit the “proofs” section and function transitionally.¹²⁹⁴ In any case, and most importantly, the theme of Paul's message is God's gifts to Israel and the fulfillment of his promises in Jesus.

Others who fear God (13:16) includes the non-Israelites present (cf. 10:2, 22; 13:43). The speech begins with God's benevolence toward Israel: he gave them land (13:19), judges (13:20), and a king (13:21). The speech reflects much biblical language and imagery. For example:

- *God chose our ancestors* (13:17; Deut 4:37; 10:15)
- *with uplifted arm* he led them from Egypt (Exod 6:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:26, 29)¹²⁹⁵
- *forty years in the wilderness* (Acts 13:18; Num 14:33; 32:13; Deut 29:5)
- *destroyed seven nations* (Acts 13:19), reflecting the count in Deut 7:1; contrast, e.g., six in Exod 23:23)
- *I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes* blends Ps 89:20 (LXX Ps 88:21); 1 Sam 13:14; and Isa 44:28¹²⁹⁶

¹²⁹² Baum, “Paulinismen in den Missionsreden,” 414–22; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 170–71. For complexities in making comparisons, see Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 102–15.

¹²⁹³ These could conceivably extend into 13:41, but probably this is part of the peroration; 13:41 may function more like a closing gnome (see comment there) than a proof.

¹²⁹⁴ Despite the handbooks, actual speeches exercised flexibility in their outlines.

¹²⁹⁵ Also many other LXX texts, usually for the exodus.

¹²⁹⁶ Midrash could blend texts, since they were all God's word anyway. The third passage uses Cyrus as a type of a divinely appointed king.

Because of a textual variant, Acts 13:18 may stress either Israel's rebellion in the wilderness (*put up with them*; cf. 7:36–44) or, better suited to this context of God's benevolence, that God "nursed" them (with the dominant reading in Deut 1:31). *Four hundred fifty years* (Acts 13:20) is a rough estimate, perhaps adding a round 400 (7:6; Gen 15:13)¹²⁹⁷ or 430 (Exod 12:40–41) years in Egypt plus 38 (Deut 2:14) or 40 (Acts 13:18) years. The point is that God and his promise, not any mortal or human lifespan, are central (cf. 13:36). *Forty years* in 13:21 may be rounded for a generation, corresponding to 13:18.¹²⁹⁸ In any case, the cumulatively long wait should reinforce the sense of privilege that salvation had finally come in their own era (13:26, 38; cf. Luke 10:24).

Although Jesus's Davidic ancestry may belong to Paul's gospel (cf. Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8), Luke emphasizes this connection more (Luke 1:32, 69; 2:11; Acts 2:25–36; 15:16).¹²⁹⁹ *Made David their king* (13:22) is literally "raised David as king," prefiguring Jesus being "raised" (the same Greek term) in 13:30 (cf. 7:37).

13:23–31: NARRATION ABOUT JESUS

Speeches often included a narrative of events leading up to the current situation. This summary, like Luke's Gospel, shows how Jesus's story continues the earlier story of God's faithfulness to Israel. As such, the survey also weaves its hearers into that story, to act like either the disobedient or the righteous remnant of Israel (13:40–41).

The gospel story proper begins with the announcement of John (Acts 1:22; 10:37; 19:4; Luke 1:5–25; Mark 1:1–9; John 1:19), including his preaching of repentance (Luke 3:3, 8).¹³⁰⁰ *Finishing his work* (Acts

¹²⁹⁷ The more technical estimate was 430 (Exod 12:40–41; Gal 3:17), but Luke elsewhere follows the 400-year estimate from Genesis (Acts 7:6). Josephus offered precise but sometimes varying estimates of biblical periods; see *Ant.* 8.61 (592 years from the exodus to the temple); 10.147 (again, 592 years); 20.230 (612 years from the exodus to the temple); cf. 10.148 (3,513 years from Adam to the temple's destruction); 11.112 (more than 500 years for the judges); comment in Schille, *Apostelgeschichte*, 293.

¹²⁹⁸ Fitting Josephus, *Ant.* 6.378; but contrast 10.143; 1 Sam 13:1.

¹²⁹⁹ See also Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*. Still, Luke merely repeats Mark's "son of David" in Luke 18:38–39.

¹³⁰⁰ One might also infer this historically from Josephus, *Ant.* 18.116–19 (for authenticity, see, e.g., R. L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-historical Study* [JSNTSup 62; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], 39–41), though Josephus's portrait is more hellenized (J. P. Meier, "John the Baptist in Josephus: Philology and Exegesis," *JBL* 111 [2, 1992]: 225–37 [234]).

13:25) interprets an athletic metaphor in Greek (retained at 20:24); such metaphors were common.¹³⁰¹ Only those taking a servile role handled another's feet;¹³⁰² although disciples might serve teachers in other respects,¹³⁰³ handling the teacher's sandals was too demeaning even for them.¹³⁰⁴ In 13:25, John thus claims to be unworthy to be the coming one's servant – even though Scripture called Israelite prophets and leaders “slaves of God.”¹³⁰⁵

As in some other passages, the new address (13:26) signals a shift in tone (cf. 2:14, 22, 29; 3:12, 17). *The message of this salvation* (13:26, 47), regarding a Savior (13:23), is the *good news promised* to their ancestors (13:32). God offered special priority to Abraham's descendants (3:25–26; Luke 13:16, 28; 16:24, 30; 19:9; cf. Rom 1:16; 2:10; 3:1–2; 9:3–5), though they could reject it (Acts 13:46; cf. Rom 2:9; 9:6–7). As *salvation* is *sent* to them (Acts 13:26; cf. 3:26; 10:36), it will also be *sent* to gentiles (28:28).

Like Peter in 3:17, Paul mitigates Jerusalem's guilt by their ignorance (13:27). He also emphasizes Jesus's legal innocence (13:28), as in Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22, 47.¹³⁰⁶ *They asked Pilate* for Jesus's death (13:28; cf. 3:14; Luke 23:23, 25), preferring Barabbas (Luke 23:18, 25; Acts 3:14);¹³⁰⁷ this speech elsewhere uses the verb only for when they requested a king and got Saul (13:21). *The tree* (13:29) recalls biblical language for publicly shaming a corpse (Deut 21:22–23);¹³⁰⁸ a deliverer could hardly be rejected (cf. Acts 7:35–37) in a more grotesque and shameful manner. *Everything written about him* includes passages applied to his sufferings (Luke 24:26–27, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:2–3; 26:22–23), such as the rejected deliverer (7:35–37) and righteous sufferer (1:20) patterns and the suffering servant (8:32–33).

¹³⁰¹ E.g., Isocrates, *Ad Nic.* 11, *Or.* 2; *Rhet. Her.* 4.3.4; Cicero, *Att.* 13.21; *Rosc. Amer.* 47.136; Seneca, *Ben.* 5.3.1; *Dial.* 1.2.3; 4.15.2; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.2.25–26; 4 Macc 9:8; 15:29; 17:12, 15; V. C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif* (NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 23–72.

¹³⁰² See, e.g., Homer, *Od.* 19.344–48, 353–60, 376, 388–93, 505; Aeschylus, *Ag.* 944–45; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.16.8; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.44; *b. B. Bat.* 53b.

¹³⁰³ Exod 24:13; 33:11; Josh 1:1; 1 Kgs 19:21; 2 Kgs 5:20; 6:15; 8:4; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.12; 7.5.170; *t. B. Mes.* 2:30.

¹³⁰⁴ *B. Ketub.* 96a. See Daube, *New Testament and Judaism*, 266.

¹³⁰⁵ E.g., 2 Kgs 9:7, 36; 17:13, 23; 21:10; 24:2; Ezra 9:11; Isa 20:3; Jer 7:25; Dan 9:6, 10; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6.

¹³⁰⁶ This prefigures also Paul in Acts 22:24; 23:28; 25:18, 27; 28:18.

¹³⁰⁷ Pilate was notorious among Jews even after his tenure and outside Judea (Philo, *Embassy* 299, 304; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35–89; *War* 2.169–77).

¹³⁰⁸ Reapplied in Jewish texts in this period for execution by crucifixion (11Q19 64.8–11).

A prominent Jerusalemite then buried Jesus (Luke 23:50–53).¹³⁰⁹ Orators would sometimes dwell on an important point;¹³¹⁰ this speech heavily emphasizes Jesus's raising (Acts 13:30, 33, 34, 37).¹³¹¹ For the appearances (13:31), see 1:3.

13:32–41: PROOFS AND *PERORATIO*

Speeches often offered proofs, frequently by citing authoritative sources. Having cited witnesses for Jesus's resurrection (13:30–31), Paul now establishes that this event fulfills the Scriptures, including the pattern of God's benevolence he has already narrated. He moves from scriptural proofs (13:32–37) to a concluding *peroratio*, inviting faith (13:38–39), but warning (again from Scripture) against unbelief (13:40–41).

The promise to the ancestors (13:32) evokes all the promises flowing from the blessing promised to Abraham (7:17; 13:23, 32–33; 26:6–7). In 13:33, Paul cites Ps 2:7, although not all manuscripts here read *second psalm* (some Jewish traditions regarded it as the first psalm). Most Jews now construed this enthronement psalm messianically.¹³¹² In context, Paul applies *begotten* here not to Jesus's birth (though Luke regards him already then as God's Son, Luke 1:35; 3:22) but to his public coronation as God's Son at his resurrection as in Acts 2:36; Rom 1:4; and especially Heb 1:5.

Jewish teachers often linked texts based on shared key terms or ideas. In Acts 13:34, Paul cites LXX Isa 55:3,¹³¹³ the name *David* connecting implicitly the royal psalmist cited in Acts 13:33, and the adjective *holy* with the next citation (Ps 16:10) in Acts 13:35.¹³¹⁴ Since David was dead (2:27), God's enduring love for him (13:34) must involve his descendant, who would not experience decay (13:35).

¹³⁰⁹ See R. E. Brown, "The Burial of Jesus (Mark 15:42–47)," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 233–45; idem, *Death*, 1240; G. O. O'Collins and D. Kendall, "Did Joseph of Arimathea Exist?" *Bib* 75 (1994): 235–41; C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 120–30.

¹³¹⁰ Hermogenes, *Method* 5.417–18; R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 53.

¹³¹¹ C. A. J. Pillai, *Apostolic Interpretation of History: A Commentary on Acts 13:16–41* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition, 1980), 81; esp. K. L. Anderson, *Raised*, 234–60.

¹³¹² E.g., 4Q174 fi–2.1.10–19; *b. Sukkah* 52a, bar.

¹³¹³ Possibly evoking the context of gentiles embracing the covenant (Isa 56:4–6) and of Isa 53.

¹³¹⁴ Whereas Luke uses a different word for *holy* seventy-one times, 13:34–35 constitute two of his three uses of this term for *holy*. *Holy* appears in Isa 55:3 only in its LXX form, but even later Judean rabbis mixed and matched text-types (including the Greek) to argue their case.

In 13:36–37, Paul shows (as Peter did in 2:29, 34) that David could not have fulfilled the promise himself, so that this reference must look beyond him to his ultimate royal descendant.¹³¹⁵ Although hagiography embellished biblical characters' heroism, Luke is clear that figures other than Jesus played temporary roles in God's larger purpose, which climaxes and is fulfilled ultimately in Jesus.

As one would expect for a historian trying to render another's speech, Acts 13:38–39 employs both characteristically Lukan and Pauline expressions.

Acts 13:38–39	Primary Lukan parallels	Parallels in Pauline literature	Other NT writers
"forgiveness of sins" through Jesus	Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 26:18	Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; cf. Rom 4:7; 5:9	1 John 2:12; cf. 1:7, 9
"everyone who believes"	Acts 10:43	Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11; 10:4, 11; Gal 3:22; 2 Thess 1:10	John 3:15–16; 6:40; 11:26; 12:46, 48; 17:21; 1 John 5:1
<i>freed</i> or "justified" (Gr. <i>dikaioō</i>)	Cf. Luke 18:14	Rom 3:24, 26, 28, 30; 4:5; 5:1, 9; Gal 2:16–17; 3:8, 24; Tit 3:7	–
Not "justified" by "the law"	–	Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16; 3:11; 5:4	Contrast perhaps James 2:21, 24–25

Although Paul's extant letters first mention justification by faith language a few years later (1 Cor 6:11; Gal 2:16), his earliest letter already emphasizes salvation through Christ (1 Thess 1:9–10; 5:9).¹³¹⁶

Just as the prophets' warnings about Jesus's rejection were fulfilled by Jerusalem's leaders who did not understand them (13:27), Paul's hearers should beware lest other prophetic warnings be fulfilled by them (13:40–41). This passage illustrates the interplay between God's sovereign plan and

¹³¹⁵ This could counter expectations of a literal David (as one could understand Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5) rather than his seed (Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5; 33:15, 17, 21; Zech 12:8).

¹³¹⁶ See also Kim, *New Perspective*, 85–99; Riesner, *Early Period*, 394–403. On Pauline soteriology here and in Paul's letters, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:2075–90.

human responsibility: someone will do the evil deed, but one should beware that it not be oneself (cf. Luke 17:1; 21:21–22; 22:22). Unfortunately, Paul's warning is quickly fulfilled (Acts 13:45, 50).

Luke commonly cites *the prophets* (13:40; cf. 3:18, 24); here (citing Hab 1:5) he means the single scroll of the shorter prophets (as in Acts 7:42; 15:15). Although expositors often linked a prophetic passage with the just-read Torah reading, this speech climaxes deliberately with this warning.¹³¹⁷ Luke might condense authentic memory of a Pauline speech here: Hab 1:5 (cited in Acts 13:41) declares a judgment hard to “believe,”¹³¹⁸ but in its context the righteous would survive the judgment because of faith (Hab 2:4), an idea the original speech may have raised in Acts 13:39, since Hab 2:4 is one of only two OT texts connecting faith and righteousness (cf. Gal 3:11).

13:42–52: RESPONSE

The immediate response to Paul's message is favorable (13:42–43),¹³¹⁹ as with Jesus's inaugural sermon in Luke 4:22 (but contrast 4:28–29). Interested people speak with them after the meeting (not surprising, since synagogues functioned as community centers, as implicit in Josephus, *Ant.* 14.214–15). The rest of the narrative, however, oscillates between contrasting Jewish and gentile hearers.¹³²⁰ The contrast underlines irony: the failure of those one expects to repent is particularly noteworthy, as is the positive response of the outsiders (cf. Luke 10:11–15; 11:31–32). One cannot predict the results of one's sowing (8:4–15).¹³²¹

On the next sabbath the gentile hearers (13:44, 46–48) largely respond more favorably than the Jewish ones (13:45). Affirming monotheistic gentiles without traditional restrictions may prove the stumbling block (Luke 4:25–28; Acts 22:21–22), like Jesus's earlier table fellowship with sinners (Luke 5:30–32; 7:34; 15:1–2).

¹³¹⁷ Cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16; the use of closing gnomes (*Rhet. Alex.* 32, 1439a33–35).

¹³¹⁸ Impending Babylonian invasion, but with the principle reapplied eschatologically in 1QpHab 2.6–15.

¹³¹⁹ *Devout converts* (13:43) probably means proselytes, the males among whom would be circumcised.

¹³²⁰ Synagogues generally did welcome gentiles; cf. Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.51–53, 308; Josephus, *War* 7.45. Gentiles did not, however, predominate, so Acts 13:44 creates a new situation.

¹³²¹ Such conflicts reflect a general human tendency; had Luke written today, he might have challenged nominal Christians who take God's message for granted.

Although *almost the whole city* (13:44) may be hyperbole,¹³²² in ancient towns word quickly spread about dramatic speakers (often the celebrities of their day, e.g., Dio Chrysostom). The gentile response is remarkable. Their most prominent cults in the region (cf. Gal 4:8–10) were Antioch's Augustus cult¹³²³ and the regional cult of Mên Askaneos.¹³²⁴ The imperial cult, with its civic celebrations on special days and months (cf. Gal 4:10), regulated much of public life in Antioch, making the incompatible commitments of aniconic monotheists inescapably obvious.¹³²⁵

As often, however, success breeds jealousy (13:45; cf. 5:17; 7:9; 17:5). The synagogue probably viewed the newcomers as violating their hospitality, supplanting their years of local effort, demanding conformity with new beliefs, and stirring trouble.¹³²⁶ Full converts already circumcised may also have resented a "lower" standard for other gentiles. They thus contradict Paul's free-from-law, "easy-believism" way of turning to Israel's God (13:45; cf. 13:38–39; Gal 6:12–13); challengers often heckled speakers during their orations.¹³²⁷

Orators often invited hearers to "judge for themselves" (as if they would not do so anyway);¹³²⁸ in 13:46 Paul declares that his adversaries have judged (*krinete*) themselves unfit for eternal life, perhaps connecting them to those who earlier condemned (*krinantes*) Jesus (13:27). As in 18:6 and 28:28, Paul uses the obduracy of his people in a given locale to offer the message freely to gentiles there, despite Israel's salvation-historical priority (13:46–47; cf. 19:9).¹³²⁹

Paul's call is climactic; his mission, like that of Jesus and the Twelve, continues the mission of the Spirit-empowered Isaian servant (13:47; cf. 1:8;

¹³²² Cf., e.g., Acts 21:28, 30; 24:3; 28:22; Mark 1:33; Deut 2:25; Ruth 1:19.

¹³²³ See *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, *Hornblower*³ 107; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:10; G. W. Hansen, "Galatia," pages 377–95 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 395; McRay, *Archaeology*, 237–38.

¹³²⁴ S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:9–10, 24–25; *MAMA* 7.4; Strabo 12.3.31; 12.8.14.

¹³²⁵ S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:10.

¹³²⁶ See S. Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 100.

¹³²⁷ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 15.26–32; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.25; 3.20.3–4; 9.13.19–20; Lucian, *Dem.* 14; *Z. Rants* 41; comment on Acts 2:13.

¹³²⁸ E.g., Aeschines, *Tim.* 196; ironically, Acts 4:19; 1 Cor 11:13.

¹³²⁹ Encountering resistance among his people, Paul came to envision it as a partial and temporary hardening that allowed the influx of gentiles (Rom 11:7, 25, 30–32; 2 Cor 3:14; Haacker, *Theology*, 90). God had not rejected his people (Rom 11:1–10), who would someday embrace faith in Jesus (Rom 11:15, 24–27, 29, 31–32). "Necessity" was one defense for the propriety of one's behavior (Hermogenes, *Issues* 76.5–7; 77.20–78.21).

Luke 2:32; 4:18), for which Isa 49:6 was a prominent summary.¹³³⁰ God entrusted the mission to his people, but through their disobedience (42:19) it is transferred to the remnant, who must restore them (49:5–6).¹³³¹

Many gentiles *destined*¹³³² *for eternal life* believe (13:48–49) and rejoice (13:48; as often with salvation in Luke-Acts, e.g., 8:39; 13:52; Luke 10:20; 15:7).¹³³³

Synagogues often depended on wealthy benefactors, including among gentiles;¹³³⁴ here they solicit the help of such benefactors to drive the apostles from town (13:50–51). Women tended to predominate among gentile sympathizers with Judaism (13:50),¹³³⁵ and, despite male social dominance in antiquity, educated and high-born women could command respect (13:50; more positively, 17:4, 12).¹³³⁶ Some women sympathizers were well-placed to secure favors for the Jewish community, such as Nero's wife Poppaea (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.195; *Life* 16). In the Diaspora, even some formal synagogues gave titles to well-to-do women, often donors.¹³³⁷

Wealthy elites in towns held lifelong and hereditary status; on average, towns had about a hundred decurions from this class for the town council

¹³³⁰ Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 96–101; cf. further M. Rese, “Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen in den Reden der Apostelgeschichte,” pages 61–79 in Kremer, *Actes des apôtres*, 76–79; J. A. Meek, *The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts* (LNTS 385; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 24–55; H. Van de Sandt, “The Quotations in Acts 13, 32–52 as a Reflection of Luke's LXX Interpretation,” *Bib* 75 (1, 1994): 26–58; A. K. Mufwata, *Jusqu'aux Extrémités de la Terre* (CahRB 67; Paris: Gabalda, 2006), 115–16, 156–57. Paul may apply to himself Isa 49:1 in Gal 1:15.

¹³³¹ Cf. D. P. Moessner, “The Ironic Fulfillment of Israel's Glory,” pages 35–50 in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. J. B. Tyson; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1988), 46–50.

¹³³² This choosing of gentiles balances God choosing Israel in 13:17. Most ancient Jewish thinkers found human responsibility (as in 13:46: *judge yourselves*) compatible with divine sovereignty (as in 13:48); note the populist Pharisees in Josephus, *War* 2.162–63; *Ant.* 13.172; 18.13. The eastern patristic emphasis on free will counters wider philosophic determinism.

¹³³³ In response to other divine activity, note further joy (Luke 1:14, 44, 47, 58; 2:10; 6:23; 10:17, 21) and “glorifying” (praising) God (2:20; 4:15; 5:25–26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47; Acts 4:21; 11:18; 21:20).

¹³³⁴ Even in Rome, some members of the elite found Judaism attractive (J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1983], 67–88). For women benefactors, cf. B. J. Brootten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (BJS 36; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 32–33.

¹³³⁵ E.g., Josephus, *War* 2.560; *Ant.* 20.195–96; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.542–47; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 25.

¹³³⁶ Plutarch, *Alex.* 21.4; *Cic.* 16.2; B. Buszard, “The Speech of Greek and Roman Women in Plutarch's *Lives*,” *CP* 105 (1, 2010): 83–115; Keener, *Acts*, 606–8.

¹³³⁷ *CIJ* 1:384, §523; 2:10, §741; 2:20, §756; Brootten, *Women Leaders*, 5–33.

(small Antioch probably had fewer), who also oversaw taxation. Antioch's leading families were descended from the Italian colonists, and were especially the Sergii Paulii family and the Caristanii, who made a marriage alliance later in the century.¹³³⁸ In any case, the apostles are driven out (13:50; note the same Greek verb in 7:58; 16:37; Luke 4:29; 6:22; 20:12, 15).

Rejecting the Lord's message invites judgment (Luke 11:49–50; 19:42–44), proleptically symbolized in Acts 13:51 by the disciples shaking the dust from their feet (cf. 18:6). Jesus's mission discourses commanded this action (Luke 9:5; 10:10–11) for when Jesus's agents experience the antithesis of hospitality (cf. Luke 9:4; 10:5–10); dust-shaking treats such towns as pagan, facing judgment (10:12–15; Matt 10:15).¹³³⁹

Thus they journey on to Iconium (13:51), at four days' walk¹³⁴⁰ beyond Antioch along the paved *Via Sebaste* (see comment on 13:14).¹³⁴¹ Estates of the Sergii Paulii lay about 110 kilometers northeast of Pisidian Antioch, and about 110–120 kilometers north of Iconium.¹³⁴² Iconium was significant among towns in its region (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.25.95).¹³⁴³ Although Acts 14:6 appears to distinguish Iconium from Lycaonia, boundaries shifted periodically; some treated Iconium as Lycaonian (Strabo 12.6.1–2; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.25.95), whereas others recognized it as culturally Phrygian.¹³⁴⁴ Less debatably, it belonged politically to the province of Galatia in this period.¹³⁴⁵

¹³³⁸ Cf. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:152; Levick, *Colonies*, 111–13.

¹³³⁹ This may evoke not bringing dust from profane land onto holy ground (Acts 7:33; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.203; *b. Ber.* 54a; *Yebam.* 6b; discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 2:2105–6).

¹³⁴⁰ Roughly 90 miles or 140–150 km.

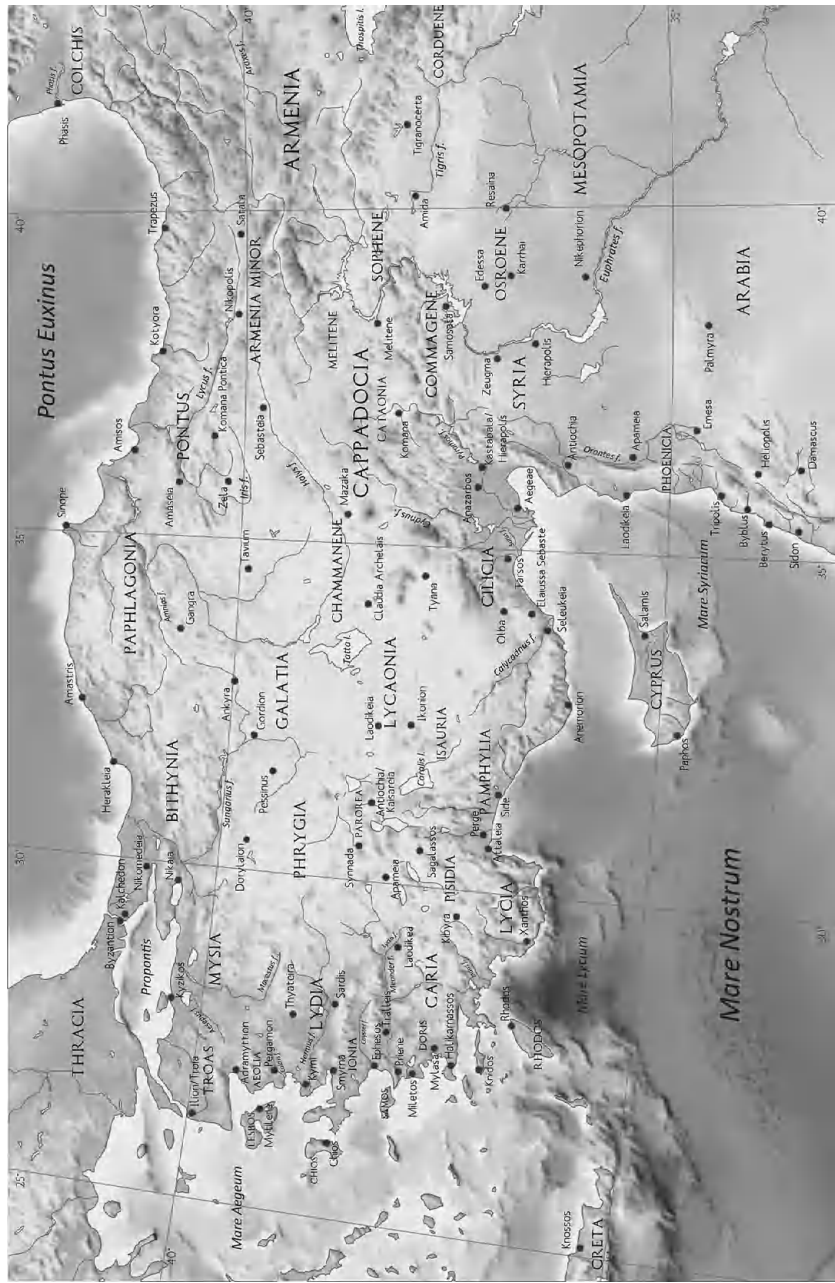
¹³⁴¹ Also *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 3. It was the only practical east–west road in this mountainous territory (S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:70). At 20–26 feet (6–8 meters) wide throughout its length, this road accommodated wheeled traffic, packed animals, and pedestrians.

¹³⁴² Estimated from map 10 after S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:164.

¹³⁴³ S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:95; 2:18; cf. Levick, *Colonies*, 183. For its fertility (in contrast to the rest of Lycaonia), see Strabo 12.6.1.

¹³⁴⁴ Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.2.19; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.245; W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), 39–40, 55–56; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 228–30.

¹³⁴⁵ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 107; Barrett, *Acts*, 661; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:99. Because north Galatia was much more sparsely inhabited in this period, because Paul normally uses provincial titles, and for other reasons, scholarly opinion has shifted toward Paul's letter to the Galatians addressing south Galatia (see, e.g., S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:3–4, 155; *OCD*³ 894; Levick, *Colonies*, 122; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 278–307; Breytenbach, *Provinz*, 99–126; discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 2:2115–19; idem, *Galatians* [Cambridge, 2018], 7–12; idem, *Galatians* [Baker, 2019], 16–22).



Whereas the opponents *were filled with jealousy* (13:45), *the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit* (13:52). The Spirit often brings joy (Luke 10:21; Rom 14:17; 15:13; Gal 5:22; 1 Thess 1:6), as also in some modern charismatic settings.

14:1–7: MIXED RESULTS IN ICONIUM

In 14:1–25, the missionaries continue to face conflicts with hostile fellow-Jews and others as they carry the gospel to other inland towns of southern Asia Minor. Although geographically 14:1 continues the location of 13:51, the intervening verse comments on the believers back in Pisidian Antioch (cf. similarly 8:38b). Thus many begin a new section here, though ancient writers were probably more concerned with narrative transitions than with our smooth modern outlines.

In Iconium, as in Antioch, it is ironically Jewish opposition that prevents a wider gentile reception and that requires the apostles¹³⁴⁶ to leave. Although many Jews and Greeks¹³⁴⁷ “believed” (14:1), Jewish adversaries slander them among the other gentiles (14:2). Paul and Barnabas continue speaking boldly, with signs (14:3; cf. 4:29–30) confirming the message of grace (cf. 20:24, 32), following Jesus’s mission teaching (Luke 9:2; 10:9). Signs do not guarantee belief; they merely make the message impossible to ignore, usually demanding faith or rejection. Yet they appear important for the gospel breaking into new regions (Rom 15:18–19; 2 Cor 12:12).

Their preaching ultimately divides the city between their own message and the claims of their accusers (14:4).¹³⁴⁸ When some attempt to stone them (14:5), however, it is time to move on, as Jesus instructed

¹³⁴⁶ Apart from 14:4, 14, Luke restricts the title “apostles” to the Twelve; but he surely knows Paul’s self-usage (Rom 1:1; 11:13) and does not theologically oppose his mentor’s self-claim. Possibly the title was publicly appropriate only after signs (cf. 2 Cor 12:12; Mark 6:7, 30; Luke 9:1–2, 10); probably Luke knows that some question Paul’s apostolic status (1 Cor 9:2), and so uses the designation sparingly. Paul employs the title more broadly (Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 1 Thess 2:7).

¹³⁴⁷ Local gentiles in hellenized Iconium probably viewed themselves as Greeks as opposed to others in the countryside; see W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 332–34. The local patron deity, however, was the Phrygian mother goddess Cybele (Ramsay, *Cities*, 330; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:18), and the imperial cult prominent there (S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:116; the temple was visible from afar).

¹³⁴⁸ Cf. Luke 12:51–53; but, *pace* some scholars, such binary descriptions appear in genuine historical works and incidents (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 5.9.6; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.49–50; Appian, *R.H.* 3.7.3; 7.5.28; 8.10.68), though some writers specify them more (e.g., Nicolaus, *Aug.* 16, 20–21, 23, 25, 27, 29).

(Luke 10:10–11; cf. Matt 10:23); stoning was normally intended to be fatal (cf. 14:19). Although some viewed fleeing as cowardly,¹³⁴⁹ in some circumstances it was simply common sense.¹³⁵⁰ They could still travel the paved Via Sebaste en route to Lystra in the south.

Against those who suppose Luke invents such dramatic opposition, Paul records sufferings far more extensive in his own writings (1 Cor 4:9–13; 15:30–32; 2 Cor 1:4–10; 4:8–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–28), including far more beatings and shipwrecks than Acts records (2 Cor 11:23–25; cf. Gal 6:17).¹³⁵¹ He faced dangers from Jews and gentiles alike (2 Cor 11:24, 26).

The flight to Lystra and Derbe (14:6) summarizes the next section (14:8–20). Lystra was a thriving market town¹³⁵² some 20–25 miles (some 32–40 km) south-southwest of Iconium across some rugged terrain.¹³⁵³ Augustus made Lystra a Roman colony,¹³⁵⁴ perhaps beginning with a thousand Italian colonists.¹³⁵⁵ Its Roman element distinguishes it from the surrounding countryside, but it was much less Romanized than Pisidian Antioch.¹³⁵⁶ Like Iconium, it belonged to south Galatia (see comment on 13:51). *The surrounding country* was apparently only sparsely settled, but their evangelism could include speaking to people along the roads to Lystra and then Derbe.

14:8–13: LYSTRA MISUNDERSTANDS A HEALING

If response to the apostles' message was mixed in Iconium (14:1–7), it proves still more ironic in Lystra. After Jesus's message heals a permanently disabled man (14:8–10), the crowds attempt to venerate the apostles (14:11–13); after the apostles reject such veneration (14:14–18), fellow monotheists have them stoned – for blasphemy (14:19–20a)!

The culture was already familiar with itinerant philosophers (especially sometimes annoying Cynics) preaching and orators practicing in public places; Paul and Barnabas can make use of this opportunity. Though Paul's letters do not reveal a Cynic, they show him ready to make use of such

¹³⁴⁹ E.g., Josephus, *Life* 146; Lucian, *Peregr.* 19–20.

¹³⁵⁰ E.g., Iamblichus, *V.P.* 31.190; y. *Abod. Zar.* 5:4, §3.

¹³⁵¹ Local persecutions also persisted in Asia Minor for decades (1 Pet 4:12–19; Rev 2:10; 3:8–10; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96; *Mart. Poly.* 1.1–2.1).

¹³⁵² Levick, *Colonies*, 154.

¹³⁵³ Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 243; Finegan, *Apostles*, 92.

¹³⁵⁴ Levick, *Colonies*, 195–97.

¹³⁵⁵ Levick, *Colonies*, 94; cf. further Levick, *Colonies*, 29–41.

¹³⁵⁶ Levick, *Colonies*, 154, 197; cf. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:11.

categories as needed (cf. 1 Cor 3:21–23; 4:11–13; 9:20–22).¹³⁵⁷ What crowds would not ordinarily expect, however, was to witness a dramatic healing of someone they knew.

Luke's account is compressed here, but the parallels with the healing of a disabled man in Acts 3 illustrate God working through Paul among gentiles as he had worked through Peter in Jerusalem:¹³⁵⁸

Acts 3:1–6	Acts 14:8–10
Peter's first narrated healing	Paul's first narrated healing
Disabled "from birth" (3:2)	Disabled "from birth" (14:8)
Peter and John "looked intently" (3:4)	Paul "gazes intently" (14:9)
Faith (of someone) brings healing (3:16)	Faith to be healed (14:9)
Command to walk (3:6)	Command to stand (14:10)
Leaping and walking (3:2)	Leaping and walking (14:10)
Near a temple gate (3:2)	Near gates (14:13)
Human "adulation" rejected (3:11–16, especially 3:12)	Human "adulation" rejected (14:11–18, especially 14:15)

In both texts, Luke's choice of the term "leap" suggests an allusion to Isaiah 35:6, the text alluded to in Luke 7:22.

Witnessing a clearly miraculous healing, the crowds respond based on their own cultural assumptions: Paul and Barnabas are gods who have come to them, as recounted in some older Phrygian tales. Like some other misinformed characters in Acts, they mistake God's agent for a deity (10:25; 28:6).¹³⁵⁹ Whereas Greeks portrayed their deities as sometimes coming in disguises (Acts 14:11),¹³⁶⁰ the true God, of different character, revealed his greater power to the people of Lystra.¹³⁶¹

The crowds probably understand the apostles' Greek, but the apostles initially do not understand what the crowds are saying (cf. 14:14),¹³⁶²

¹³⁵⁷ On Paul and Cynics here, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:2131–42.

¹³⁵⁸ Following Spencer, *Acts*, 149; M. Fournier, *The Episode at Lystra: A Rhetorical and Semiotic Analysis of Acts 14:7–20a* (New York: Lang, 1997), 199–203; see also Bede, *Comm. Acts* 14:8; for comparison with Luke 5:18–25, see Lindemann, "Einheit," 238–42.

¹³⁵⁹ While probably not reflecting the same incident, Gal 4:14 may be related.

¹³⁶⁰ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 1.105; 17.484–87; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.212–13, 220; 5.449–61; Valerius Maximus 1.8. ext. 7; cf. angels in Gen 18:2–16; Tob 5:4; Heb 13:2.

¹³⁶¹ See L. H. Martin, "Gods or Ambassadors of God? Barnabas and Paul in Lystra," *NTS* 41 (1, 1995): 152–56.

¹³⁶² Some communication required interpreters (Xenophon, *Anab.* 4.5.34; 7.2.19; Cicero, *Fam.* 13.54.1; Plutarch, *Themist.* 6.2; 28.1), but here seeing the bulls could have simply prompted them to ask bilingual hearers what was happening.

because the Lycaonians are conversing in their local language or dialect (14:11).¹³⁶³ The rural and mountainous interior of Anatolia preserved indigenous languages and religious customs into late antiquity.¹³⁶⁴

Although scholars have proposed other backgrounds, most commentators are right to recognize the background of one myth from nearby Phrygia.¹³⁶⁵ In the myth, Zeus and Hermes visited Phrygia; when only one couple (Baucis and Philemon) responded hospitably, the gods destroyed everyone else in a flood.¹³⁶⁶ Because of this tradition, Jews also associated the flood with Phrygia (*Sib. Or.* 1.196, 261–62). This region was also morally strict and fearful of divine punishment,¹³⁶⁷ Zeus and Hermes were key and often paired deities in the region,¹³⁶⁸ and these Lycaonians dare not risk repeating their neighbors' ancestral inhospitality. Because Paul was the main speaker, they associate him with Hermes (Acts 14:12), messenger of the gods (Homer, *Od.* 1.38, 84) and god of orators (Lucian, *Nigr.* 10; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.12.20; 1.19.7).

*The priest of Zeus*¹³⁶⁹ brings oxen and garlands to the gates (14:13). Bulls or oxen were expensive hence especially employed for the most important sacrifices.¹³⁷⁰ Those celebrating a festival or sacrificing animals could don garlands; they could seek to crown their deities with garlands (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.60); but oxen could also be garlanded before being sacrificed (Lucian, *Sacr.* 12; *Dem.* 11).¹³⁷¹ The *gates* may be the city gates, since the *temple was just outside the city*; others suspect the temple's gates are meant. Luke's point in mentioning the gates might be simply to remind the reader of another healing by a gate in Acts 3:2.

¹³⁶³ Lystra's Roman citizens spoke Latin, but the native Anatolians spoke Lycaonian, while probably also understanding some Greek.

¹³⁶⁴ *OCD*³ 190–91.

¹³⁶⁵ E.g., Parsons, *Acts*, 199; Pervo, *Acts*, 353–54; Rowe, *World*, 20–21.

¹³⁶⁶ Ovid, *Metam.* 8.618–724. The story is indigenously Phrygian (see Trebilco, *Communities*, 88–90). For southern Asia Minor flood traditions, see Bechard, *Walls*, 291–337.

¹³⁶⁷ E.g., S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:189, 191; A. C. Niang, *Faith and Freedom in Galatia and Senegal: The Apostle Paul, Colonists and Sending Gods* (BIS 97; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 51–63.

¹³⁶⁸ E.g., *MAMA* 8.1; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:24.

¹³⁶⁹ A local inscription mentions priests of Zeus (Hemer, *Acts in History*, 111 n. 25). Elites typically acquired local priesthoods through benefaction, so possibly this priest has quick access to animals because he owned them.

¹³⁷⁰ E.g., Polybius 32.15.1–2; Pliny, *Nat.* 8.70.183; Lev 1:5.

¹³⁷¹ Note also ancient artwork in Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 146.

14:14–20: REJECTED FOR REJECTING DEIFICATION

When Paul and Barnabas discover that the crowd understands the precise opposite of their monotheistic message, *they tore their clothes* (14:14). Both Jews¹³⁷² and gentiles¹³⁷³ could rend their clothes for mourning (cf. 18:6). When hearing blasphemy, one would tear one's garments.¹³⁷⁴

The apostles seek to restrain them (14:18) with preaching about the true God (14:15–17). Luke summarizes their preaching in language reminiscent of the LXX but intelligible to a pagan audience. A comparison of Paul's¹³⁷⁵ speeches in 13:16–47 (a synagogue audience), 14:15–17 (a rural community), and 17:22–31 (a Greek urban elite) reveals his adaptability to diverse audiences. Like Paul's skill in speaking extemporaneously here,¹³⁷⁶ adapting one's form for one's audience was valued.¹³⁷⁷ Although Luke's summary, the ideas comport well with Paul's preaching about natural revelation (Rom 1:19–22), idolatry (Rom 1:23–25; cf. 1 Cor 8:5–6; 10:20–21), and repentance from idolatry (1 Thess 1:9).¹³⁷⁸

Although Paul builds on some traditional Jewish apologetic bridges to gentiles, his call for repentance directly addressed to listening gentiles is more confrontational. Still, Jewish literature often mocked paganism,¹³⁷⁹ following the lead of some biblical prophets (1 Kgs 18:27; Isa 44:12–17; 46:6–7; Jer 10:3–5; Ps 115:4–8).¹³⁸⁰ Sometimes even gentiles mocked what they viewed as ludicrous elements of mythology.¹³⁸¹ But polytheism was

¹³⁷² E.g., Gen 37:29, 34; 44:13; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.115; Josephus, *War* 2.316; *Ant.* 7.4, 40; 9.67; *Sipre Deut.* 43.3.8.

¹³⁷³ E.g., Quint. Curt. 10.5.19; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.78; Suetonius, *Jul.* 33; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 46.12.

¹³⁷⁴ *M. Sanh.* 7:5; *b. Sanh.* 60a, bar.; cf. *b. Mo'ed Qat.* 25b–26a; *y. Mo'ed Qat.* 3:7, §§7–8; *Sanh.* 7:6, §7; Matt 26:65. This response to blasphemy might include a natural extension of the response to not only mourning but treason (2 Kgs 11:14; 2 Chron 23:13; perhaps Josephus, *War* 2.316).

¹³⁷⁵ And Barnabas's here (14:14), but Paul is the main speaker (14:12).

¹³⁷⁶ A prized skill (Seneca, *Controv.* 10. pref. 2; Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.7.1; Apuleius, *False Preface* 1.103–4; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.482; 1.24.529; 2.26.614).

¹³⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.30, 1367b; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.24; Suetonius, *Rhet.* 6. Compromising content, by contrast, was blameworthy (Ps.-Phoc. 49; Marshall, *Enmity*, 71–73; C. E. Glad, “Paul and Adaptability,” pages 17–41 in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* [ed. J. P. Sampley; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003], 20–21).

¹³⁷⁸ Cf. Haacker, *Theology*, 103–4; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 145.

¹³⁷⁹ E.g., Wis 13:10–14;7; Bel and Dragon; Ep Jer; *Let. Aris.* 134–38.

¹³⁸⁰ For Isaiah, see Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 181–216.

¹³⁸¹ E.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 2.5.17; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 11, passim; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.14; esp. Lucian, *Z. Cat.* 2–8; *Lover of Lies* 2–5; *Prom.* 17; *Parl. G.* 7. See more fully Keener, *Acts*, 2:2159–64; idem, “The Exhortation to Monotheism in Acts 14:15–17,” pages 47–70 in

difficult to abandon: deities or spirits were all around, in trees, in stars, as personified virtues; for Romans, they were associated with families and even the *genii* of individuals. Polytheism was an all-encompassing worldview. Cult statues were not the central element of most Greco-Roman religion, but neither were they mere accessories.¹³⁸² Intellectuals could use statues as simply symbols of or pointers to deity,¹³⁸³ but even they regarded such images as useful ways to honor their deities.¹³⁸⁴

Apostles model positively (10:26; 14:15), and a tyrant negatively (12:22–23), the virtue of mortals refusing divine honors.¹³⁸⁵ The apostles exhort their hearers to *turn from these worthless things to the living God* (14:15). In Luke-Acts, “turning” entails repentance (Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 15:19; 26:18–20; 28:27). Both the LXX and Diaspora Judaism called idols *worthless* or “vain” (see also Rom 1:21).¹³⁸⁶ Paul’s evangelistic preaching summoned gentiles to turn from idols to the living God (1 Thess 1:9).¹³⁸⁷

Unlike gods in the images of anything created (including humans, 14:11), God made heaven, earth, the sea, and everything in them (Acts 14:15; 17:24), a threefold summary rooted Scripture (Exod 20:11;¹³⁸⁸ Neh 9:6; Ps 146:6; Acts 4:24) but intelligible also to gentiles.¹³⁸⁹ Yet many gentiles also viewed heaven, earth, and sea or their rulers as particular deities,¹³⁹⁰ in the Anatolian interior and especially around Phrygia,¹³⁹¹ the Earth mother, the mother goddess, was especially venerated.

God previously overlooked the nations’ ways (14:16; cf. 17:30), probably meaning that he overlooked sin to allow opportunity for repentance, as in Wis 11:23 (cf. Rom 3:25). Despite diplomatic language, Paul is certainly not praising their ancestors, as rhetoricians advised (Socratics, *Ep.* 28)!

Kingdom Rhetoric: New Testament Explorations in Honor of Ben Witherington III (ed. T. M. Halcomb; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

¹³⁸² J. B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 32–36.

¹³⁸³ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.52, 54, 59; Lucian, *Portr. D.* 23.

¹³⁸⁴ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.60.

¹³⁸⁵ Hellenistic Jews used the term rendered *just like you* for shared humanity (4 Macc 12:13) or createdness (Wis 7:3); in Greek, *mortals just like* reverses the crowd’s *in human form* in Acts 14:11.

¹³⁸⁶ E.g., 1 Kgs 16:13, 26; Isa 44:9; Jer 2:5; Wis 13:1; 14:14; 15:8; 3 Macc 6:11; *Sib. Or.* 3.29, 547–48.

¹³⁸⁷ Jewish people often spoke of *the living God* (*Jub.* 1:25; 21:4; *Sib. Or.* 3.763), including by contrast with polytheists’ dead ones (e.g., Jer 10:10 MT; *Jos. Asen.* 8:5).

¹³⁸⁸ The three also appear in Exod 20:4 in a polemic against idolatry (cf. Isa 45:16–18).

¹³⁸⁹ Virgil, *Georg.* 4.221–22; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.180; Horace, *Ode* 1.12.13–18.

¹³⁹⁰ Prominent myth also divided rulership among Zeus (heaven), Hades (underworld), and Poseidon (sea; Lucian, *Dance* 37).

¹³⁹¹ See, e.g., Euripides, *Bacch.* 58–59, 79; Lucretius, *Nat.* 2.611; *Rhet. Her.* 4.59.62; Valerius Maximus 7.5.2; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 108.7. See further in Keener, *Acts*, 2:2166–67.

Although much of Lycaonia was barren, the indigenous residents of Lystra were rural, and rural interests in Asia Minor diverged sharply from those of urban communities.¹³⁹² In 14:17 Paul thus appeals to God's testimony in *rains and fruitful seasons* (cf. Ps 19:1–6; Wis 13:1; Rom 1:20; 2:4). Some gentile philosophers had also appealed to the testimony of creation to God's character (see esp. Ps.-Heraclitus, *Ep.* 4). The speech would challenge the local emphasis on Zeus as provider of rains and fertility;¹³⁹³ instead, God's benevolence sends timely rains,¹³⁹⁴ fills creation with good things (*Sib. Or.* 3.659–60), provides food in its season (*Let. Aris.* 190) and designed fruitfulness (Gen 1:12, 29–31; *1 En.* 5:2). Although *seasons* were central in the myths related to the agricultural cults,¹³⁹⁵ monotheists recognized that God gave the seasons (Gen 8:22; Ps 74:17; Philo, *Creation* 59). Although great speakers could sometimes calm riotous crowds (cf. Acts 19:35; Diogenes, *Ep.* 2), the apostles barely and only temporarily succeed here.

So concerned are Paul's Jewish enemies from Antioch and Iconium that he is spreading what they view as false teaching that representatives follow him to Lystra to warn against hearing him. Although Iconium was a mere 20 miles away, Pisidian Antioch was over 100 miles. Nevertheless, inscriptions show that Lystra and Antioch shared a close relationship as sister colonies.¹³⁹⁶ Hearing of the apostles' continuing activity, hostile Antiochans may have gathered allies in Iconium who already wished to stone them (14:5).

Perhaps learning that locals are trying to honor the apostles as gods, they stir the crowds to reject them, perhaps portraying them as sorcerers dishonoring to any deity. Ironically, the apostles, who have insisted vociferously on monotheism, are now stoned for blasphemy (14:19).¹³⁹⁷ Further

¹³⁹² S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:195; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 15, 30, 32.

¹³⁹³ C. Breytenbach, "Zeus und der lebendige Gott: Anmerkungen zu Apostelgeschichte 14.11–17," *NTS* 39 (3, 1993): 396–413; cf. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:23; more widely, e.g., Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 9.11–13.

¹³⁹⁴ Lev 26:4; Ps 145:15; 147:8–9; Jer 5:24; *1 En.* 2:3; *m. Ta'an.* 1:1; *t. Ros Has.* 1:13; *Sukkah* 3:18; *Sipre Deut.* 38.1.3–4.

¹³⁹⁵ Cf. Apollodorus, *Bib.* 1.5.3; 3.14.4; Ovid, *Metam.* 5.564–71.

¹³⁹⁶ W. M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 224; idem, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (5th ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897), 47–50; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:76. The few Jews in Lystra itself may have been more assimilated (cf. 16:1–2).

¹³⁹⁷ Cf. similarly some Ephesian Jews trying to dissociate themselves from Paul's anti-idolatry preaching in 19:33–34.

ironically, they are stoned in part by the very polytheists¹³⁹⁸ who had blasphemously just tried to worship them! Like Luke (14:18–19; 19:32; 28:4–6), most ancient writers depicted the masses as fickle,¹³⁹⁹ while this often expressed elite prejudice, fickleness often characterizes modern politics and news cycles as well. Another factor is also relevant: gentiles would regard as blasphemers those who dishonored their gods (14:15), and those who performed signs not by divine power would be viewed instead as malevolent magicians.

Stephen's stoning, in which Paul participated (7:58–60), raises suspense for Paul's (14:5, 19).¹⁴⁰⁰ Paul fulfills Jesus's call to share the cross (Luke 9:23; cf. 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 1:9). The supposition that Paul is dead might be false (Luke usually uses the Greek term for false suppositions; Luke 2:44; 3:23; Acts 7:25; 8:20; 16:27; 17:29; 21:29; but cf. 16:13). In any case, contrary to those who assume this mob stoning novelistic, Paul himself reports it (2 Cor 11:25). Mob stonings pervaded the Roman world.¹⁴⁰¹ Suffering in a manner consistent with beliefs was often used to show sages' integrity.¹⁴⁰² *The disciples* (14:20a) are presumably already-won converts from Lystra (cf. 14:7, 21–22; 16:1–2). Occasionally victims survive stoning, despite its intention.¹⁴⁰³ Once his antagonists had left Paul for dead, he could safely reenter Lystra. He might well have no choice, especially if he remained injured; night travel was dangerous.

Derbe (modern Kerti Hüyük or Devri Sehri) was about 60 miles (about 96 km) southeast of Lystra on a likely unpaved road; thus *the next day* they went "toward" rather than "to" Derbe (*pace* NRSV). Derbe was a boom town, becoming a respectable Greek city only recently and soon to be honored as Claudioderbe.¹⁴⁰⁴ It was also beyond where Paul's adversaries would likely pursue. *Gaius* in 20:4 is one of the disciples from there (14:20).

¹³⁹⁸ The grammatical antecedent of *stoned* is "the Jews," but *won over the crowds* suggests that they recruited the crowds' aid.

¹³⁹⁹ E.g., Livy 31.34.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 66; 73.5–7; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.15–16; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.41; *Hist.* 1.32, 45; 3.85; 5.8.

¹⁴⁰⁰ For stoning and dragging bodies outside the city, see comment on 7:58.

¹⁴⁰¹ MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 66; see comment on 7:58.

¹⁴⁰² See esp. Fitzgerald, *Cracks*, *passim*.

¹⁴⁰³ E.g., Polybius 6.37.1–6. This happened to northern Nigerian church planter Tambaya Jibirin, whom I met July 2, 1998; cf. others in Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*, 98, 105. For cases of those wrongly left for dead, see, e.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.54.142 (though dying later); Pliny, *Nat.* 7.52.173; Plutarch, *Cic.* 33.3.

¹⁴⁰⁴ S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:95–96; Hansen, "Galatia," 389.

14:21–28: COMPLETING THIS MISSION JOURNEY

After visiting Derbe (14:20b), the apostles courageously follow up the young churches at other locations (14:21; 15:36, 41; 18:23; 20:2–3),¹⁴⁰⁵ warning them by example and teaching to expect hardships for the kingdom (14:22). They normally exhort new believers to persevere (11:23; 13:43; 1 Thess 3:3–4), necessary in view of alternative paths (Luke 8:12–15).¹⁴⁰⁶ Apparently tempers had cooled sufficiently for discreet ministry in less public venues; the danger of violence stemmed from mobs, not from ordinary encounters.

Although Luke agrees with the exhortation, it also characterizes Pauline preaching. Paul often speaks about tribulation (e.g., Rom 5:3; 8:35) and also speaks of the kingdom as future (1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:24, 50; Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 2:12). Both Luke and Paul may see present tribulation in an eschatological light (Luke 21:12–24; Rom 8:22). They combine exhortation to believers with prayer and fasting (see comment on Acts 13:2–3), trusting God.

They also appoint leaders to maintain the new believers' cohesion. Organizing converts consolidates the mission's results, ultimately into self-propagating bodies capable of sustained growth.¹⁴⁰⁷

A Closer Look: Elders

Scholars debate whether Paul called the leaders he appointed elders,¹⁴⁰⁸ or this is Luke's subsequent title for them. What is certain is that the title was already available. Gentiles could describe some civic leaders as elders.¹⁴⁰⁹ The more direct source of Christian usage was probably the synagogue. A *gerousia*, or council of elders, ruled the Alexandrian Jewish community (Philo, *Flacc.* 74, 76, 80; cf. 3 Macc 1:8); the Sanhedrin could go by this title (Philo, *Embassy* 229; Josephus, *War* 7.412; *Ant.* 13.166, 169); and "elders"

¹⁴⁰⁵ Cf. also 1 Cor 4:17–21; 16:3–7; 2 Cor 12:20–13:2; Phil 2:24; 1 Thess 3:5–7; Phlm 22. For strengthening believers, see Acts 15:32, 41; 16:5; 18:23; Rom 1:11; 1 Thess 3:2; for encouraging them, e.g., Acts 15:32; 16:40; 20:1–2; Rom 12:1; 15:30; 16:17.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Early Christians warn often against apostasy, e.g., John 15:5; Rom 11:22; 1 Cor 9:27–10:12; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 4:19; 5:4; Eph 4:30; Col 1:23; Heb 2:1–3; 3:12–14; 4:11; 6:1–8; 10:26–27, 35, 39; 12:15–17.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Willimon, *Acts*, 150, comparing Francis Asbury's successful organizational skills.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Plainly leaders existed early in Paul's churches (e.g., 1 Cor 12:28; 16:16; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12–13). "Charismatic" and "institutional" are not antithetical (see 1 Chron 25:3; H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983], 52–54).

¹⁴⁰⁹ Aeschines, *Tim.* 180; Diodorus Siculus 21.18.1; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 27, 81.

appear often in Diaspora synagogues.¹⁴¹⁰ Elders also appear second only to priests in 1QS 6.8–9.

Jews derived the title from traditional Israelite leadership (e.g., Exod 17:5; 18:12; Lev 4:15; Num 11:30; 16:25; Josh 7:6; 1 Macc 12:35), including in towns and villages (e.g., Ruth 4:2–11; 1 Kgs 21:11; 1 Esd 9:13; Jdt 6:16, 21; 7:23; 8:10; 10:6) and in Jerusalem (1 Esd 6:5; 9:4; 1 Macc 7:33; 2 Macc 14:37). It also appears in Luke's descriptions of Galilean towns (Luke 7:3) and in Jerusalem (9:22; 22:52; Acts 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15). ****

On its south, Pisidia adjoined Pamphylia (14:24), and writers saw them as closely connected.¹⁴¹¹ Perga's Jewish community may have invited their ministry.¹⁴¹² Attalia was Pamphylia's primary seaport,¹⁴¹³ and the place where they could find a large ship traveling to Syrian Antioch.¹⁴¹⁴ Reporting God's mighty works back to the Antioch church (14:27) fits Luke's pattern of retelling divine deeds within the story (cf., e.g., Luke 9:10; 10:17).¹⁴¹⁵ Paul elsewhere speaks of open doors as opportunities for ministry (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3); in Acts 14:27 the open door refers to opportunity for gentiles to believe (cf. 16:14).

15:1–5: CONFLICT OVER CIRCUMCISING GENTILES

Paul's frontline mission brings (uncircumcised) converts, but keeping the universal church's unity while defending this mission requires ratifying the latter (15:1–35). Satisfying the mother church's conservative home base will prove more difficult than satisfying the earlier trusted emissaries reporting on Samaria (8:14–17) and Antioch (11:22–23). Although Luke highlights the ultimate consensus, this discussion might proceed more like Peter's grilling in 11:2–3 (Gal 2:3–5).

¹⁴¹⁰ *CIJ* 1:lxvii–lxxxvii (e.g., *CIJ* 1:294, §378; 1:432, §595); Barclay, *Jews in Diaspora*, 43; Applebaum, "Organization," 491–94.

¹⁴¹¹ Cicero, *Div.* 1.1.2; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.23–24.94; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 35.14.

¹⁴¹² M. R. Fairchild, "Why Perga? Paul's Perilous Passage through Pisidia," *BAR* 39 (6, 2013): 52–59, 84.

¹⁴¹³ See further Finegan, *Apostles*, 84–85; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:77, 153, 247; Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 166–72.

¹⁴¹⁴ See D. A. Campbell, "Paul in Pamphylia (Acts 13.13–14a; 14.24b–26): A Critical Note," *NTS* 46 (4, 2000): 595–602.

¹⁴¹⁵ On this subject see Maloney, *Narration*, 117–35. Even if this occasion is merely Luke's inference, it is a reasonable one; travelers regularly carried news (e.g., 1 Cor 1:11) and Paul was connected to Antioch (Gal 2:11).

The opening verses of this section continue the geographic locale of the preceding context (the church in Antioch, in 14:26–15:3a), but they introduce a new question: the necessity of circumcision (15:1, 5), and the keeping of the law of Moses (15:5; cf. 15:20, 29). The church of cosmopolitan Antioch has welcomed gentiles as full members without circumcision, but are now confronted by teachers demanding circumcision (15:1).

Although not sent by the apostles (15:24), these teachers plainly have some support in Jerusalem (15:5; cf. Gal 2:4, 12). Jewish teaching required gentiles to be circumcised to join God's people (a position different from Paul's), but at least some Judeans (such as those depicted in 15:1) went further, demanding it even for salvation and table fellowship. The Jerusalem apostles perhaps tried to accommodate them for the sake of peace in Jerusalem, but such accommodation did not make for peace in Antioch (Gal 2:11–14; Acts 15:2).

By the mid-40s, in the wake of Caligula's threats and Agrippa's rule (cf. 12:3), Judea experienced a revival of nationalism, which influenced also the Jerusalem church.¹⁴¹⁶ Considering the influence of political trends on churches today, and how trends in different cultures' churches sometimes threaten cross-cultural Christian unity, may help us identify more concretely with the struggles embodied in the council.

Antioch favors Paul's side of the debate, hence sends *Paul and Barnabas* (who previously approved Antioch's gentile outreach for Jerusalem, 11:22–24), both former leaders of their church (13:1). Their delegation also included *some of the others* (15:2), historically including Titus, a gentile (Gal 2:3).¹⁴¹⁷

The journey was roughly 250 miles. Possibly they sailed by way of Phoenicia (Acts 15:3) and Caesarea, then traveled inland to pass through Samaria (15:3) en route to Jerusalem. The Diaspora churches celebrated the missionaries' reports (Acts 15:3), the proper response to God's activity (8:8, 39; 11:23; 16:34). The Jerusalem church listens to the gentile mission's confirming signs (15:12; cf. 14:27; 15:3–4), even if their response seems more muted.¹⁴¹⁸

¹⁴¹⁶ Cf. Riesner, *Early Period*, 280; Acts 21:20.

¹⁴¹⁷ Diaspora churches appear to be like Diaspora synagogues: not controlled by Jerusalem, but respecting the mother city's leadership.

¹⁴¹⁸ Later rabbis rejected the validity of miracles for establishing halakah (cf. R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," pages 415–80 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 452; *t. Yebam.* 14:6).

The conservative Jerusalem church now includes Pharisees (15:5). Although some of Jesus's interlocutors in the Gospel were Pharisees (Luke 5:21, 30; 6:2, 7), Luke is not against Pharisaism as a whole (Luke 13:31; Acts 5:34; 23:6),¹⁴¹⁹ and non-Christian Pharisees may have supported law-observant Jesus followers in this period.¹⁴²⁰ The problem here is that some Christian Pharisees insist on circumcising the gentile converts about whom the missionaries are testifying. Jewish tradition required proselytes to obey the Torah; becoming part of God's people meant obeying the rules that govern God's people.¹⁴²¹ (Titus may become the test case; Gal 2:3.) Perhaps these conservatives allowed Cornelius as an exception, but they were unwilling to make him a precedent.

A Closer Look: The Jerusalem Council and Galatians?

Many scholars doubt that Gal 2:1–10 refers to the same meeting as Acts 15, often preferring instead a parallel with the sparsely summarized journey of 11:30.¹⁴²² This link eliminates contrasts but also most parallels.¹⁴²³ They argue for the earlier occasion partly because Paul allows for no interim meeting with Jerusalem apostles in Gal 1:17–2:10, and they find such a meeting in Acts 11:30. Yet Acts 11:30 explicitly mentions Paul meeting only with elders, not apostles (perhaps because the apostles are public targets, 12:2–4, 17).

These scholars also argue for a date before the council because in Galatians Paul does not appeal to the decrees of 15:20, 29. But Paul had delivered them earlier to no avail (16:1–4),¹⁴²⁴ and the decrees were only binding as far as Syria and Cilicia, which appears to be as far as the

¹⁴¹⁹ Cf. J. A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 85–126; Gowler, *Host*, 301–5.

¹⁴²⁰ See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–1 (using a description that he elsewhere applies to Pharisees; *War* 2.162; *Life* 191).

¹⁴²¹ See Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.210; *t. Demai* 2:5; *Sipre Num.* 71.2.1. Nevertheless, keeping all of a people's regulations and customs was naturally easier for those who grew up with them (Plutarch, *Lect.* 2, *Mor.* 37EF).

¹⁴²² For much more detailed treatment, see Keener, *Acts*, 3:2195–2206; of mediating length, idem, *Galatians* (Cambridge, 2018), 4–7, 65. Some scholars argue that Luke has conflated two different actual events. While Luke was able to conflate, however (Acts 7:16), Paul's and Luke's different perspectives seem sufficient to account for the differences.

¹⁴²³ Rather than referring to the prophecy of Acts 11:28, the *revelation* in Gal 2:2 undoubtedly refers to what it indicates in Gal 1:12, 16: Paul's gospel.

¹⁴²⁴ Newcomers from Jerusalem might also claim support from a constituency there, thus purporting to supersede the decrees.

challengers’ influence had spread by that point (15:23). Moreover, not mentioning the decree cannot prove that Paul wrote before its issue; he does not appeal to the decree when addressing some of its issues in Corinth (1 Cor 6:12–21; 8:1–13), even though he certainly writes after the council.

By contrast, a majority of scholars, including myself, identify the events of Gal 2:1–10 with Acts 15, simply allowing for the writers’ independent and thus different perspectives.¹⁴²⁵ At the time of Acts 15, troubles had not yet reached Galatia (15:23). The parallels are considerable and would normally supply what we call multiple attestation.

Commonalities	Acts 15:6–22	Gal 2:1–10
The same basic object	Acts 15:5	Gal 2:4
The same basic outcome	Acts 15:19–21, 28–29	Gal 2:5–6
Paul’s mission is recognized	Acts 15:12	Gal 2:2
Leaders agree that gentiles need not be circumcised	Acts 15:19–20	Gal 2:7–9
Peter was involved	Acts 15:7–11	Gal 2:9
James was involved	Acts 15:13–21	Gal 2:9

The issue raised in Gal 2:1–5 does not appear to be resolved before Acts 15:1–2. That Paul was involved in two such meetings, the second repeating the first, is unlikely. That Paul reports only one of these meetings and Luke the other strains plausibility even further. Further, one would hardly expect James, Peter, and John to request Paul to remember the poor (Gal 2:10) on a trip specifically to help the poor (Acts 11:29–30).

The main differences between the accounts stem from their independence and the writers’ differing agendas: while both note what is at stake, Paul emphasizes the concluding agreement and Luke the support of Peter and James, who must have been vital there, as Paul himself hints

¹⁴²⁵ See, e.g., Bede, *Comm. Acts* 15.2; H. N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 78–80; R. H. Stein, “The Relationship of Galatians 2:1–10 and Acts 15:1–35: Two Neglected Arguments,” *JETS* 17 (1974): 239–42; H. D. Betz, *A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 81–83; S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 533–36; D. J. Williams, *Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 256–61; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 540; Barrett, *Acts*, xxxviii–xxxix; J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 446–50.

(Gal 2:6, 9).¹⁴²⁶ The most significant specific difference is Paul's omission of the decree; Paul appeals instead to first principles more influential far from Jerusalem. Because the decree's focus was probably table fellowship (cf. Acts 15:20, 28–29) rather than Paul's heavier emphasis on gentile believers joining God's people (Gal 3:6–14), it was presumably less important for Paul than for Luke's need for a narrative climax to the issue. For both, the compromise solution reached at the council probably appeared more important than it did to the Jerusalem church, where it was merely one among many disputes.

Luke presents the council in a way useful for his audience and omits most subsequent concerns (though cf. 21:21), but he would hardly report the council and then fabricate its outcome.¹⁴²⁷ Fitting the genre of ancient historiography, Luke is, as scholars often emphasize, both historian and theologian. ****

A Closer Look: Circumcision¹⁴²⁸

Scripture required that foreigners be circumcised to become part of the covenant people (Gen 17:12–13; Exod 12:48). In the Maccabean period Jews had risked their lives to circumcise their children.¹⁴²⁹ Even many gentiles viewed circumcision as a distinguishing boundary marker of Jewish ethnicity.¹⁴³⁰

Thus Jewish practice normally treated circumcision as necessary for becoming part of the covenant people.¹⁴³¹ A minority of Judeans treated it as necessary even for a place in the world to come,¹⁴³² the radical Judean view articulated in Acts 15:1. Some were apparently prepared to impose it even by force on gentiles wishing to remain in the land promised to God's

¹⁴²⁶ Dunn, *Acts*, 196. Gal 2 may also report the more “confidential conferences with the leading people behind the scenes,” whereas Luke focuses on the public assembly and its conclusions (F. J. A. Hort, *Judaistic Christianity* [ed. J. O. F. Murray, 1894; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980], 66).

¹⁴²⁷ Indeed, its rules persisted for more than a century (e.g., Tertullian, *Apol.* 9.13; see further Bauckham, “James,” 464–65).

¹⁴²⁸ Condensing Keener, *Galatians* (Cambridge, 2018), 230–32; and, more fully, idem, *Acts*, 3:2215–19.

¹⁴²⁹ 1 Macc 1:60–61; 2 Macc 6:10; 4 Macc 4:25; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.256.

¹⁴³⁰ See, e.g., Petronius, *Sat.* 102.14; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1–2; M. Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Roman Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 80–85; Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*, 132–36.

¹⁴³¹ See Esth 8:17 LXX; Jdt 14:10; *t. Abod. Zar.* 3:12; *Ber.* 6:13, *ed. princ.*

¹⁴³² See Donaldson, *Paul and Gentiles*, 275, and discussion there.

people.¹⁴³³ Diaspora Jews, who constituted an easily identifiable minority and who often interacted with gentiles, were usually more circumspect, avoiding alienating gentile sympathizers who did not wish to become Jews fully.¹⁴³⁴

Paul's Judean detractors may have resembled the Galilean named Eleazar in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.34–45. King Izates had become a Jewish sympathizer through the persuasion of one Ananias, a Jewish merchant, but Ananias tried to prevent Izates from being circumcised, fearing an anti-Jewish backlash. Eleazar, by contrast, insisted that failure to be circumcised made a mockery of his profession of Jewish faith, and so persuaded the king to act.

If Paul's opponents were something like a Christian version of Eleazar, however, Paul was nevertheless much more radical than Ananias. Ananias opposed circumcision out of "necessity" (*Ant.* 20.42), a recognized category of ethical argument that reduced culpability.¹⁴³⁵ But Paul as a matter of principle prohibited imposing any external demand such as circumcision, since those who had received the eschatological Spirit already belonged to God's people, making them already part of the eschatological new creation.¹⁴³⁶ If God granted that promised eschatological covenant blessing – God's *own* Spirit (Gal 3:14) – without the old sign of the covenant, the traditional sign was acceptable but not necessary (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15). Outward signs were nothing compared to God himself, and a symbol of relationship with God was nothing compared to its eschatological fulfillment.

The council's consensus position was that God accepted gentiles who committed their allegiance to Jesus. Unlike Paul, however, many still saw them as God-fearers who would share the world to come, but not as members of God's people.¹⁴³⁷ Galatians suggests that the council did not stop Paul's rivals, although they probably began nuancing their position

¹⁴³³ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.318; *Life* 113, 149–50 (noting his own objections); see also J. R. Harrison, "Why Did Josephus and Paul Refuse to Circumcise?" *Pacifica* 17 (2, 2004): 137–58.

¹⁴³⁴ See Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 71–73.

¹⁴³⁵ Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.8.22–25; Ps.-Quintilian, *Decl.* 262.5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.91; Hermogenes, *Issues* 77.6–7.

¹⁴³⁶ Cf. Isa 32:15; 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29. On the centrality of the Spirit to Paul's argument in Galatians, see also, e.g., G. D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 102–3.

¹⁴³⁷ J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 38; Keener, *Acts*, 2205, 2218, 2228, 2259, 2262, 2269.

more carefully. Paul, more radically, welcomed gentiles who received the Spirit as full proselytes without requiring physical circumcision.¹⁴³⁸ ****

15:6–12: APPEALING TO GOD’S CONFIRMATIONS

This is one of the passages where Luke sacrifices some clarity for conciseness.¹⁴³⁹ In 15:6, *the apostles and elders*¹⁴⁴⁰ go into executive session. Perhaps this is the smaller, private meeting of Gal 2:2, but apparently some of the detractors (Acts 15:5), who are probably among the elders, are still among them (Gal 2:4). Paul testifies (Acts 15:4, 12), but Luke lets Peter and James carry the case for Jerusalem’s conservative church (15:7–11, 13–21).¹⁴⁴¹ Peter here sounds almost Pauline,¹⁴⁴² though there was probably more shared ground in early Christian theology than modern critics sometimes acknowledge (cf. the appeal to shared belief in Gal 2:16).¹⁴⁴³ Paul was more forceful than Luke emphasizes (except in 15:2; cf. 15:7a), though probably in a private meeting (Gal 2:2–5). Although Luke’s summary seems aware of a private (Acts 15:6) as well as public (15:4–5) meeting, and Luke notes debate in 15:7, he gives specific voice to the other side only in 15:5.

¹⁴³⁸ Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 229, 276; Sanders, *Paul*, 462; T. L. Donaldson, “‘Riches for the Gentiles’ (Rom 11:12): Israel’s Rejection and Paul’s Gentile Mission,” *JBL* 112 (1, Spring 1993): 81–98.

¹⁴³⁹ Rhetoricians condemned brevity that impaired clarity (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2 *Amm.* 2).

¹⁴⁴⁰ Probably as two distinct but mutually respectful forms of leadership coexisting in the Jerusalem church; different leadership groups needed to work together, however (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.16). The elders perhaps replaced the Seven when they were scattered (cf. 11:30); they may exercise local leadership (like elders in other locations) whereas the apostles exercise broader authority (cf. “rulers and elders” in 4:5, 8; national and local leaders coexisting in Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 23:1; 2 Chr 34:8, 29; Luke 20:1; 22:52, 66). That Paul must answer to the elders in Jerusalem is ironic in that Paul has just been *appointing* elders for new localities in 14:23.

¹⁴⁴¹ Assemblies often mistrusted first-time speakers (*Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1437a.35–38), and voices from unexpected advocates carried greater weight (M. Heath, “Invention,” pages 89–119 in Porter, *Handbook of Rhetoric*, 91–92). Historically, Peter did agree, though not always with the highest commitment (Gal 2:12).

¹⁴⁴² In Acts 10–11, Peter goes to the gentiles before Paul does, and 15:7–11 displays elements that cohere with Pauline theology.

¹⁴⁴³ See J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1995), 134; R. B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 71; M. C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 143. Our earliest external source for Petrine theology, however, also mentions faith fairly frequently (1 Pet 1:5, 7, 8, 9, 21; 2:6, 7; 5:9; cf. 2 Pet 1:1, 5), including for salvation (1 Pet 1:9) and in a text also used by Paul (1 Pet 2:6; Rom 9:33; 10:11); for grace, see 1 Pet 1:10, 13.

Assemblies that followed Greek democratic patterns required the approval of the entire citizen assembly (15:22). Speakers would argue the case from their various perspectives (15:5, 7), offering witnesses (15:4, 12), ideally in the end achieving harmony (15:25).¹⁴⁴⁴ The leaders, however, do play a special role here, as in many ancient political structures (15:6, 13).

After the apostles and elders have debated the question of circumcising gentiles (15:6–7a), Peter recounts the incident with Cornelius, where God welcomed gentiles without circumcision (15:7–11).¹⁴⁴⁵ Although the speech summary is too brief for formal rhetorical analysis, various rhetorical components are visible: Peter establishes his *êthos* or credibility (15:7); mixed narrative (*narratio*) and proofs (15:7–9);¹⁴⁴⁶ and comparison (15:10).¹⁴⁴⁷

God alone knows human hearts (15:8; cf. 1:24; 13:22), and thus only he can arbitrate hidden matters.¹⁴⁴⁸ In Peter's vision, God purified food that was unclean (Acts 10:15), thus abolishing the distinction between pure and impure peoples that the food laws were designed to uphold (Lev 11:44–45; 20:26).¹⁴⁴⁹ Even before these gentiles experienced anything like proselyte baptism, God's Spirit attested their eschatologically purified hearts (Acts 15:8; see Ezek 36:25–26; cf. 1QS 4.20–22).

If God's people rebelled against what he had testified (Acts 15:8–9), they would be testing God (15:10), a serious offense (Luke 4:12; Acts 5:9) like that of Israel in the wilderness (Exod 17:2, 7; Num 14:22; Deut 6:16; Ps 78:18, 41). Jewish people contrasted favorably the “yoke of the law” or “of the commandments,”¹⁴⁵⁰ and of God's kingdom,¹⁴⁵¹ with other, mortal yokes.¹⁴⁵² (Later rabbis also spoke of proselytes accepting the yoke of the

¹⁴⁴⁴ Witherington, *Acts*, 450–51. All voices must be heard (Livy 3.45.5–6).

¹⁴⁴⁵ For the value of functional redundancy here, see Witherup, “Cornelius over again.”

¹⁴⁴⁶ On the *narratio* in 15:7–9, see also M. E. Okoronkwo, *The Jerusalem Compromise as a Conflict-Resolution Model* (Bonn: Borengässer, 2001), 175–77.

¹⁴⁴⁷ For comparison, see, e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 4, 1427a.37–40; Musonius Rufus frg. 23; Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 8 (Synchysis), 18–20; Amos 1:3–2:6. As expected for a typical assembly, the speech functions deliberatively (Soards, *Speeches*, 90; Witherington, *Acts*, 453; Okoronkwo, *Compromise*, 174, 201).

¹⁴⁴⁸ 1 Sam 16:7; *Let. Aris.* 132–33, 189; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.52; Rom 8:27; 1 Jn 3:20.

¹⁴⁴⁹ For God purifying hearts, see, e.g., Ps 51:10; Heb 9:14. Earlier, cf. “cleansing” lepers in Luke 4:27; 5:13–14; 7:22; 17:14, and casting out “unclean” spirits in Luke 4:36; 6:18; 8:29–33; 9:42; Acts 5:16; 8:7. Jesus prioritized moral purity (Luke 11:39–41; cf. Ps.-Phoc. 228) over traditional regulations (Luke 5:13; 7:14; 8:45–48, 54; but cf. 2:24). Cf. both elements for John in Josephus, *Ant.* 18.116–17.

¹⁴⁵⁰ See Jer 5:5; 2 Bar. 41:3; *m. Abot* 3:5; *Sipra Shemini* pq. 12.121.2.5; *Sipre Deut.* 344.4.2; cf. *Ps. Sol.* 7:9; wisdom in Sir 51:26.

¹⁴⁵¹ *M. Ber.* 2:2, 5; *Sipra Behar* par. 5.255.1.9, 11.

¹⁴⁵² E.g., *m. Abot* 3:5; *t. B. Qam.* 7:5.

commandments.)¹⁴⁵³ The image here, however, is harsher (cf. Gal 5:1). Oxen bore yokes, but for people yokes typically represented servitude.¹⁴⁵⁴ The law is good, but even Jewish believers did not meet its standard without grace (Acts 15:10–11); seeking to be justified by divine instruction abused its purpose.¹⁴⁵⁵ Judean believers thus dare not lay on others a burden they could not lift themselves (Luke 11:46).

The following silence may imply respect,¹⁴⁵⁶ as well as the lack of further voiced objections (cf. comment on Acts 2:13). Barnabas¹⁴⁵⁷ and Paul show that God continues confirming his welcome of gentiles, as he did in the case of Cornelius, with signs (15:12).¹⁴⁵⁸ Luke uses the verb here translated *told* (also in 15:14) for recounting firsthand testimony of God's works (Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 21:19). Peter and other apostles beside James largely disappear from Luke's focus after this point, having completed their narrative function of supporting God's new work in the Diaspora.¹⁴⁵⁹

15:13–21: JAMES'S BIBLICAL PROPOSAL

After God's obvious recent activity has garnered sufficient attention, James resolves biblical objections (15:5).¹⁴⁶⁰ In an honor–shame culture, making proposals in public assemblies was risky business; such proposals could bring praise, blame, or a mixture of the two, on those who advanced them, depending on their reception (Pliny, *Ep.* 3.20.1). James, however, has

¹⁴⁵³ *B. Yeb.* 47b.

¹⁴⁵⁴ E.g., Gen 27:40; 2 Chron 10:4–14; Is 10:27; Jer 27:8–12; 1 *En.* 103:11; *Sib. Or.* 3.391–92, 448, 508, 537, 567. Many Jews expected gentiles to be subjugated eschatologically to Israel's yoke (1 *En.* 103:11; cf. Isa 60:10–14). For figurative uses of slavery images, see Keener, *Acts*, 3:2237–38.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Cf. the yoke image more positively in Matt 11:29–30; *Did.* 6.2; 1 *Clem.* 16.7; *Barn.* 2.6. On the law's function, see Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 207–36.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Pliny, *Ep.* 2.18.2; Neh 5:8.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Barnabas may take the lead here (in contrast to most of chs. 13–14) because Jerusalemite believers know him better (4:36–37; 9:27; 11:22).

¹⁴⁵⁸ They appeal not to hermeneutically random “experience” but to indisputable signs of God's activity.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Notable reconciliations between famous men was also a rhetorical topic (Aulus Gellius 12.8).

¹⁴⁶⁰ Paul also ranks James most prominent at this meeting (Gal 2:9); his introduction in Acts 12:17 suggests that Luke's audience is already familiar with him. For one recent and extensive discussion of James's speech, see M. Neubrand, *Israel, die Völker und die Kirche* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2006), 108–249.

sufficient diplomatic skill, and especially stature with the conservative faction,¹⁴⁶¹ to offer a successful “moderate” proposal.

Rhetorically, Peter's speech provides the narrative, whereas James's elaborates the proofs. James understands Peter's (Simeon's)¹⁴⁶² experience as an initial example of God taking *from among gentiles a people for his name* (15:14). This was normally a title for Israel,¹⁴⁶³ but James applies it to gentile believers based on the text he will quote, in which God calls his name over gentiles (15:17). Although Luke would quote the Greek form of any texts in any case, scholars often suggest that James argues here from the Septuagint, which they doubt that James would have genuinely cited. To this several answers may be relevant:

1. It would disrespect the Diaspora delegates (15:2), whose future the discussion concerned, not to use the language they would understand (cf. 15:23).
2. Even later rabbinic sources in Hebrew or Aramaic draw on whatever versions, including the Septuagint, serve best their point.
3. Public life in Jerusalem included Greek as well as Aramaic, and even many residents of Lower Galilee were partially bilingual.
4. For what it is worth, the early letter widely circulated in James's name displays a higher level of Greek than here, fitting its Diaspora audience (Jms 1:1).¹⁴⁶⁴

In Amos 9:11, David's mighty “house” became a dilapidated “tent” or “booth” (cf. Isa 11:1), deferring the promise to David's household (2 Sam 7:12–16),¹⁴⁶⁵ celebrated in Judah's cult, to a future restoration. Some

¹⁴⁶¹ Cf. Acts 21:20–24; Gal 2:12. Unlike Peter, James had not been fraternizing with gentiles (cf. Acts 10:23, 48; 11:3; later, Gal 2:12) or been away so much from Jerusalem (Acts 9:32–11:2; 12:17; later, Gal 2:11); cf. F. F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John: Studies in Early Non-Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 91–92.

¹⁴⁶² Cf. 2 Pet 1:1. Greek-speaking areas assimilated the patriarchal name “Simeon” to “Simon,” easily the most common male name in Judea and Galilee (M. H. Williams, “Names,” 93); the names were interchangeable (Josephus, *Life* 190, 309; *War* 4.159), but James appeals here to cultural conservatives, the way a father combatting hellenism calls his son Simon (e.g., 1 Macc 5:17, 20–21, 55), “Simeon” (2:65).

¹⁴⁶³ Deut 28:10; 2 Chron 7:14; Isa 43:7. Luke usually uses also this term for *people* (*laos*) for Israel (e.g., Luke 1:68, 77; 2:32; Acts 7:17, 34; 10:41–42; 13:17, 24; 26:17, 23; 28:17, 26–27). *Take . . . a people* evokes Exod 6:7 LXX, again for Israel.

¹⁴⁶⁴ James's choice of *text* is plausible enough in Judea; a key Qumran document uses this Amos (CD 7.14–6, linking those two texts, Amos 5:27; 9:11) based on the shared Hebrew root *skt*.

¹⁴⁶⁵ The passage plays on various senses of David's “house” (2 Sam 7:5, 7, 13, 27). 4Q174 fi–2.1.9–13 also connects Amos 9 to 2 Sam 7.

plausibly apply this prophecy to a restored temple, but Luke disconnects the temple from David (Acts 7:46–47), so the restoration of David’s house (Luke 1:27, 69; 2:4), that is, of Davidic rule, makes more sense.

In the future restoration, they would possess Edom (Num 24:18; Isa 11:13–14; Obad 17), as in Amos 9:12, but the next line in Amos shows that Edom simply typifies *the nations* more generally. Thus the LXX revo-calizes “Edom” as “Adam,” and translates it as “peoples,” followed by James in Acts 15:17. *Over whom my name has been called* indicates ownership; this may include conquest (possessing them, as in Amos’s earlier line), but could also resemble God’s ownership of Israel, for whom the expression is also used.¹⁴⁶⁶ Perhaps thinking of the context in which God showed providence toward other peoples (Amos 9:7; cf. 3:2), James applies it positively; in the prophets a remnant of gentiles would become part of God’s covenant people (Isa 19:18–25; Zech 2:11; 9:7; Zeph 3:9; cf. Jer 12:16). *From long ago* (15:18; cf. Luke 1:70) may evoke Isa 45:21 and might compensate for James’s omission of “days of old” from Amos 9:11.

Thus James offers a compromise.¹⁴⁶⁷ God welcomes gentiles among his people (15:17),¹⁴⁶⁸ but on a practical level conscientious Jews would want some basic assurances before engaging in table fellowship. While some believers might agree to disagree for the moment regarding circumcision, a least-common-denominator position could maintain peace and the church’s witness in Jerusalem: most Jews believed that righteous gentiles, Luke’s “God fearers,” would share in the coming age. Jews expected these gentiles to keep some basic minimal standards, such as avoiding idolatry, sexual immorality, and (because explicit for all descendants of Noah in Gen 9:4) avoiding food with blood in it, i.e., meat that was strangled instead of bled (Acts 15:20).

¹⁴⁶⁶ Deut 28:10; 2 Chron 7:14; Isa 63:19; Jer 14:9; Dan 9:19; 4Q285 f8.11; 4Q504 f1–2R2.12; 11Q14 f1.2.15; Sir 36:17; 2 Macc 8:15; Bar 2:15; Ps. Sol. 9:9; Bauckham, “James,” 457. The only other NT passage to use “called by the Lord’s name” this way is also attributed to James (Jms 2:7).

¹⁴⁶⁷ Many arguments advocating harmony address the conventional topic of compromise (M. M. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 132). The compromise is not a Pauline nor likely Lukan fiction; that it stems from the council is indeed likely, though Paul may play it down in Gal 2:6, 10; see Keener, *Galatians* (Baker, 2019), 135–37.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Theologically, this resembles Paul’s position, but James manages to satisfy his constituency’s orthopraxy purity concerns.

A Closer Look: The Decree's Prohibitions

Scholars propose various views of the four (or three) prohibitions in 15:20, 29; 21:25. These include the following:

1. The prohibitions are purely moral, analogous to the three most basic Jewish moral prohibitions; but this does not explain *strangled* in most manuscripts.
2. They address pagan temples; but a simple prohibition of frequenting temples would be clearer.
3. They echo prohibitions for strangers in the land in Lev 17–18.
4. They echo the Noahide laws.

In their rabbinic form, the Noahide laws are later, but they draw on pre-Christian expectations for the behavior of righteous gentiles.¹⁴⁶⁹ Because these traditions in turn draw on prohibitions for strangers in Lev 17–18, one need not force a choice between these backgrounds.¹⁴⁷⁰ If gentiles will dwell in Israel's midst (Jer 12:16; Zech 2:11), biblical prohibitions for sojourners in Israel (Lev 17–18) are relevant. But these prohibitions correspond in only a limited way to those in Acts, and apply only in the holy land. Blending them with more developed expectations for righteous gentiles, plus widespread ideas of universal moral laws, thus provides a fuller background.¹⁴⁷¹

Paul may not have seen a problem with a decision that did not interfere with what he was already doing: he taught against idolatry (1 Cor 8:1–13; 10:14–11:1; 1 Thess 1:9–10) and sexual immorality (1 Cor 5:1–13; 6:9–10; 1 Thess 4:3–8) anyway, and the surest source of meat not offered to idols was kosher butchers (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 14.261). Certainly he desired to maintain unity (Rom 15:25–27); he also opposed causing others to stumble, including those who would stumble over believers' dietary choices (Rom 14:14–23; 1 Cor 8:9–13). Paul may have preferred internal leading of the Spirit to a decree, "but he could hardly object to a proposal which gave him the essentials of victory."¹⁴⁷² ***

¹⁴⁶⁹ See *Jub.* 7:20; *Sib. Or.* 3.757–66; *Ps.-Phoc.* 3–54, 86, 135–36, 147–48, 154, 177–83; later, *t. Abod. Zar.* 8:4–8; *b. Sanh.* 56a, bar.; Christian parallels in *Did.* 3.1–6.

¹⁴⁷⁰ J. Taylor, "The Jerusalem Decrees (Acts 15.20, 29 and 21.25) and the Incident at Antioch (Gal 2.11–14)," *NTS* 47 (3, 2001): 372–80, even argues that James thought in terms of Lev 17–18 but Peter in terms of Noahides.

¹⁴⁷¹ E.g., Gaius, *Inst.* 1.1; see the fuller case in Keener, *Acts*, 3:2260–69. Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, "Natural Law in Second Temple Judaism," *VT* 45 (1, 1995): 17–44.

¹⁴⁷² W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 227.

In Greek, James's *I* in 15:19 is emphatic; a highly respected speaker's opinion could itself count as a supplemental proof (*Rhet. Alex.* 14, 1431.9–19). *Things polluted by idols* (15:20) is *what has been sacrificed to idols* (15:29); this involves especially foods cooked for (sacrificed to) pagan deities and then eaten by their worshipers (or resold in the meat market).¹⁴⁷³ Guild meetings and dinner parties opened with a libation;¹⁴⁷⁴ social obligations involving sacrificial meals were virtually unavoidable.¹⁴⁷⁵ Instruction for new converts was thus crucial.

Fornication is a very general term that encompasses any kind of sexual immorality delineated by the Torah, i.e., any intercourse outside of marriage.¹⁴⁷⁶ When animals were *strangled*, *blood* remained in the carcass. In practice, cutting and cooking meat, including sacrificial meat, removed most blood anyway,¹⁴⁷⁷ but kosher butchering, which drained the blood, left no doubt. Although this prescription seems less important morally than the other two, it could not be sidestepped because God prescribed it for all descendants of Noah (Gen 9:4) as well as sojourners in Israel (Lev 17:10–14).¹⁴⁷⁸ It apparently symbolized respect for creatures' lives (Lev 17:11).

James concludes that permitting margins for gentiles will not hinder Jewish law observance (Acts 15:21), a concern also in 21:21.¹⁴⁷⁹ Most Jerusalemite believers were probably like most people today, thinking in binary categories: whoever was against imposing the law on gentiles was probably against it altogether. In reality, Paul's position was more nuanced

¹⁴⁷³ See, e.g., D. E. Smith, *Symposium*, 67–69. Against many, I believe that Paul, like Rev 2:14, 20, opposed all known idol food (see 1 Cor 10:1–22; C. S. Keener, *1 and 2 Corinthians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 72–73, 84–88; D. E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* [BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003], 395); this is assumed for Christians in Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.10.

¹⁴⁷⁴ D. E. Smith, *Symposium*, 28–30.

¹⁴⁷⁵ W. L. Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (SBLDS 68; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 63 n. 234.

¹⁴⁷⁶ See, e.g., *1 En.* 8:1–2; *Jub.* 20:3–4; 33:20; *Wis* 14:24; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.199; *Sipre Num.* 115.5.7; one extensive survey in W. Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); briefly, C. S. Keener, “Adultery, Divorce,” pages 6–16 in C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

¹⁴⁷⁷ Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 278–79.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Though some later rabbis considered it a lighter offense (*Sipre Deut.* 76.1.1; 76.3.2), it was deadly serious in *Jub.* 6:6–10; 21:6, 17–19; *1 En.* 98:11; *CD* 3.6; 12.12–14.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Conversely, it could mean that gentile believers should abstain from the practices in 15:20 to avoid offending the many synagogue attenders of 15:21.

(1 Cor 7:19–20; Gal 5:6; 6:15). Jewish communities were widespread enough to make sense of James’s hyperbole, *in every city* (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 14.115).

15:22–29: THE CONSENSUS DECREE

The apostles and elders assented to James’s proposal, and issued a circular document for the gentile churches, which would be confirmed orally by figures trusted in those churches alongside representatives of the Jerusalem church. This compromise agreement was meant to preserve the unity of the Jewish and gentile believers.¹⁴⁸⁰ Although Paul knows of opposition in the Judean church (Rom 15:31), he also attests a consensus among the leaders that recognized one another’s ministries, including Paul’s ministry for uncircumcised gentiles (Gal 2:7–10). Luke’s portrayal of the peaceful result of consensus fits contemporary civic ideals; see comment on Acts 15:25.

Whether then or later, the assembly ultimately voices their approval of James’s wisdom (15:22). “It seemed proper” (NRSV, *decided*, 15:22, 25; *it seemed good*, 15:28) was standard idiom for hellenistic decrees.¹⁴⁸¹ Civic assemblies could send letters or delegations to the public assemblies of other cities; Jerusalem, of course, remained special (cf. Isa 2:3; Gal 4:26).

Assemblies generally sent their most trusted agents as representatives (Aeschines, *Embassy* 23; *Let. Aris.* 40). For Christians, tested willingness to die for Christ was, as here, an important criterion for recognizing devoted servants of Christ (Luke 9:23–26; Rom 16:4; Phil 2:30). Here the assembly commissions two witnesses (cf. Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15) from their own circle, Judas and Silas,¹⁴⁸² to complement the testimony of Antioch’s Barnabas and Saul (whose role is also respected, Gal 2:7–9). They can counter those who misrepresent the “Jerusalem” perspective (15:24–25). They can also orally provide context for the decree.¹⁴⁸³

¹⁴⁸⁰ For the emphasis on unity here, see, e.g., H. D. Park, “Drawing Ethical Principles from the Process of the Jerusalem Council: A New Approach to Acts 15:4–29,” *TynBul* 61 (2, 2010): 271–91.

¹⁴⁸¹ Aune, *Environment*, 128.

¹⁴⁸² “Judas” was a highly popular Judean name; as in 1:23, “Barsabbas” often meant “born on the sabbath.” Some regard “Silas” as another hellenized, Aramaic form of Hebrew Saul; his more formal, Latin name is Silvanus (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 5:12), a name shared with a woodland Satyr.

¹⁴⁸³ Cf. 1 Macc 12:23; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 4.5.34; Cicero, *Fam.* 14.1.6; *P.Oxy.* 32; Col 4:7–8.

This letter functions as an encyclical, like those sent by earlier Judean leaders.¹⁴⁸⁴ Historians sought to incorporate letters and documents when possible,¹⁴⁸⁵ and the substance of this brief document (only slightly longer than the average papyrus letter)¹⁴⁸⁶ was probably available to Luke in multiple locations (15:30; 16:4) and/or memories. Historians could, of course, adapt their sources stylistically. In the absence of a formal civilian postal service, letters were normally carried by travelers.

Greetings (chairein, 15:23; 23:26; Jms 1:1) was the conventional greeting in most Greek letters (as opposed to the common NT “grace and peace”). *To the believers of Gentile origin* is literally “to the brothers [and sisters] who are from the gentiles” – addressing gentile believers with the same familial language used for Judeans in 15:7, 13, 23.¹⁴⁸⁷ Antioch (15:22) was in Syria (15:23), which was conjoined with Cilicia as a double province in this period, and until 72 CE (cf. 23:34; Gal 1:21).¹⁴⁸⁸

The Jerusalem church honors gentile believers with a carefully constructed letter presumably drafted by James’s and the church’s best scribes. It opens with a period, an elaborate literary structure¹⁴⁸⁹ found only here in Acts (as well as Luke 1:1–4 in Luke). They were normally to be avoided except for “more elevated subject-matter” inviting “a higher tone.”¹⁴⁹⁰

Lest Diaspora believers take offense at even the minimal requirements of 15:29, the letter prepares by showing that the decree is much more lenient than the trouble-makers of 15:24; the congregation was united (15:25, 28) and led by the Spirit (15:28); the missionaries to the gentiles agreed (15:25) and had been welcomed by the Jerusalem church (15:25–26); and Jerusalem

¹⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Aune, *Environment*, 185; M. F. Whitters, “Some New Observations about Jewish Festal Letters,” *JSJ* 32 (2001): 272–88.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Judge, *Athens*, 135–36; see, e.g., 1 Macc 10:18–20, 25–45; 11:29–37; 13:35–40; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.65; 3.16, 53–54; 4.39; 6.6; 15.13, 24; 16.24, 27. Fronto, *Ad Verum Imp.* 2.1.14, notes that histories could preserve letters but, when an original was lacking, compose them.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Averaging 87 words, typical letters ranged from 16 to 209 words (Richards, *Letter Writing*, 163).

¹⁴⁸⁷ The title does not, however, reflect a full ecclesiology; the designation can, e.g., be applied to gentiles who are allies (1 Macc 12:6, 10, 21; 14:20, 40).

¹⁴⁸⁸ They adjoined in any case (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.35.129; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.163).

¹⁴⁸⁹ Uniting extensive clauses and phrases and completing the thought only at the end; see Rowe, “Style,” 151–52; R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 94–101; Aune, *Dictionary*, 346–47. Ideally it should remain within memorable length (A. Vatri, “Ancient Greek Writing for Memory,” *Mnemosyne* 68 [2015]: 750–73 [757]).

¹⁴⁹⁰ M. B. Trapp, *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), xxxiv. Stylists normally avoided them in letters, except in short ones (A. J. Malherbe, “Ancient Epistolary Theorists,” *OJRS* 5 (2, 1977): 3–77 [17]).

had sent its own genuine representatives (15:27) in contrast to the false claimants of 15:24.¹⁴⁹¹

Letters of recommendation could be used to authorize people (as in 15:25–27; cf. comment on 9:1–2); this one also unauthorizes those who have abused their Jerusalem connections to imply the support of the church as a whole (15:1, 24; cf. 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 4:25). The anti-recommendation of 15:24 follows the ancient technique of demeaning opponents by conspicuously refusing to name them,¹⁴⁹² identifying them merely as *certain persons* (cf. also 15:1, 5; 24:19).¹⁴⁹³ The term translated *disturb* (15:24) could also apply to “stirring” unrest (Acts 17:8, 13); in his letters Paul applies it solely to his circumcisionist rivals (Gal 1:7; 5:10).

Ancient political discourse advocated harmony as opposed to the more common state of division.¹⁴⁹⁴ Jewish groups also often agreed to abide by majority decisions. The emphasis on consensus and unity in Acts 15:25 is not incidental. Luke does not suppress the initial divisions (15:1–2, 5), but emphasizes the consensus outcome. Given Rome’s preoccupation with order, Luke is happy to contrast believers’ more respectable, orderly procedure with riotous assemblies opposing the church (16:19–22; 19:24–40; 21:27–36; 22:30–23:11).¹⁴⁹⁵

Seemed good in 15:28 resembles the language of decrees from emperors or civic assemblies¹⁴⁹⁶ (hence the language of “decrees” in 16:4, weakened in the NRSV to “decisions”). More striking is the role of the Spirit: the same Spirit that authored and advanced the gentile mission (1:8; 2:4–11; 8:29; 10:19, 44–47) now led the church to confirm this mission.¹⁴⁹⁷ The Spirit testified through Scripture (15:15–17; cf. 1:16) and recent

¹⁴⁹¹ Cf. the rhetorical value of preparatory words (e.g., R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 104–5).

¹⁴⁹² See Marshall, *Enmity*, 341–48. The non-naming is conspicuous in Aeschines, *Ctes.* 1; Demosthenes, *Or.* 19.120; Cicero, *Agr.* 24.63–64; *Res Gestae* 1.1; 4.24; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.8–9; 47.11, 20–21; 51.3; Lucian, *Peregr.* 11–13; *Hist.* 17.

¹⁴⁹³ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.36; 47.23; Aelius Aristides, *Def. Or.* 247, §76D. Sometimes, however, anonymity is just anonymity (e.g., Acts 10:23; 11:20).

¹⁴⁹⁴ See M. M. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*; Keener, *Acts*, 3:2286–89.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Still, Luke does not present the sort of formal order found in, e.g., 1QS.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.221; 16.163; E. Schnabel, “Fads and Common Sense: Reading Acts in the First Century and Reading Acts Today,” *JETS* 54 (2, June 2011): 251–78, here 259.

¹⁴⁹⁷ For the Spirit and ethnic unity in Acts, see also M. Wenk, “Community Forming Power: Reconciliation and the Spirit in Acts,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 19 (1999): 17–33; the Spirit and the gentile mission, see, e.g., Philip, *Pneumatology*, 204–24; on the Spirit’s possible personal action, W. H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (SBLDS 147; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994), 255–56; H. H. Choi, “The Personality of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament with Special Reference to Luke-Acts” (PhD dissertation,

demonstrations (15:8; cf. 15:12), and brought consensus. *No further burden* (15:28)¹⁴⁹⁸ echoes 15:10.

Finally, after building rapport, 15:29 lists the requirements, on which see comment on 15:20. This verse replaces *things polluted by idols* (15:20; cf. 4 Bar. 7:37) with the more concise and familiar Jewish term *eidôlothutos* (idol-meat, Acts 15:29; NRSV, *what has been sacrificed to idols*; cf. 4 Macc 5:2).¹⁴⁹⁹ *Farewell* was a common letter closing.¹⁵⁰⁰

Bridging Horizons: Finding Common Ground

Although we can appreciate the pattern of seeking common ground and a working consensus, Acts 15 is not a fully ideal “missions model” for us, since it is dictated primarily by the mother church.¹⁵⁰¹ Conversely, the newer churches were only a few years old; second, the Jerusalem church is not *any* mother church, but held a special role in salvation history; third, the Antioch church representatives (most vocally Paul and Barnabas) had given voice to concerns of the Diaspora churches; and fourth, the decree would do more in practice to protect the Diaspora churches from traveling Jerusalemites’ interference (how Luke may especially employ it) than to actually force implementation of its prescriptions far from Jerusalem. (Thus, e.g., we never hear of Paul, in his letters or Acts, delivering decrees after 16:4.) ***

15:30–35: DELIVERING THE MESSAGE IN ANTIOCH

The Antioch church celebrates the mother church having accommodated their members rather than siding with the circumcisionists. They *rejoiced* (15:31) and *sent* back Jerusalem’s delegation *in peace* (15:33).¹⁵⁰² The church’s unity is preserved.

University of Wales, 1999), 101–222; J. Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 211; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 129–80.

¹⁴⁹⁸ The phrase might be idiomatic; cf. Rev 2:24; BDAG.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Note Christian use in 1 Cor 8:1; Rev 2:14; *Did.* 6.3; probably Ps.-Phoc. 31; *Sib. Or.* 2.96.

¹⁵⁰⁰ See esp. J. A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings* (JSNTSup 101; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 29–34.

¹⁵⁰¹ Cf. the problems that debates in Rome entailed for Jesuit missionaries in Asia. For Jesuit missions in Asia, see, e.g., J. D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1984); S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964), 162–65, 183–94.

¹⁵⁰² Sending another away in peace esp. means unharmed (16:36; 1 Cor 16:11; Gen 26:29, 31; 2 Sam 3:21–23; 3 Macc 6:27; 1 *Clem.* 65.1)

Someone, perhaps Paul or a literate local leader (cf. 13:1), would read the letter to Antioch's Christians (15:31). (Although such a short letter could be quickly recopied or recited from memory, even in urban settings not all people could read sophisticated Greek.)¹⁵⁰³ Whoever read it, Judas and Silas (15:32) expounded further, as letter carriers (and especially prophets, 15:32) might. They *encourage and strengthen the believers* (15:32; cf. 11:23; 14:22; 15:41; 18:23; 20:1–2).¹⁵⁰⁴ Their exhortations are trusted like those of other prophets in Antioch (11:27–30; 13:1–2).¹⁵⁰⁵

Luke's condensed story does not explain how Silas leaves in 15:33 yet is present in 15:40, though the indefinite *some days* (15:36) could allow much to transpire in the meantime (cf. 9:23, 43; 18:18). The voyage from or to Jerusalem could take fifteen days to a month; perhaps he returned with a later delegation (cf. Gal 2:11–12) or perhaps he stayed for continued ministry when the rest of his delegation returned to Jerusalem (cf. *many others* in 15:35).

15:36–41: CONFLICT WITH BARNABAS OVER MARK

Despite Luke's emphasis on early Christian unity, as a historian he covers briefly, rather than suppressing, the schism between Paul and Barnabas; he must explain the transition in Paul's partners. When partners differ over which absolute values take priority – in this case loyalty or forgiveness on one hand, and expectation of whole-hearted commitment on the other – conflict appears inevitable.¹⁵⁰⁶ While the two parties' motives may be honorable, however, their schism contrasts starkly with the consensus painstakingly achieved in 15:22–29.

Paul naturally wants to follow up the churches planted earlier (15:36; cf. 2 Cor 11:28–29; 1 Thess 3:5; comment on Acts 14:21–22), although his circumcisionist detractors have probably not yet traveled north into Galatia (15:23). This plan foreshadows the immediate future of the narrative; foresight rather than crisis shaped his plan (cf. Luke 9:51; Acts 19:21).

¹⁵⁰³ The NRSV probably assumes *its members* in 15:31 because they are the subject of *rejoiced*.

¹⁵⁰⁴ The term translated *exhortation* in 15:31 (on the Spirit-led letter) is a cognate of *encourage* in 15:32; it is one function of prophetic speech (1 Cor 14:3).

¹⁵⁰⁵ Prophecy apparently usually employed first-person discourse from the Lord (e.g., Acts 13:2; 21:11; Rev 2–3), but its content was often exhortation, not just prediction.

¹⁵⁰⁶ On the nature of these two virtues and of the conflict, in light of ancient ethical perceptions, see Keener, *Acts*, 3:2300–2309.

In 15:37, Barnabas's clemency fits his character; he had also shown Paul himself such kindness (9:27; 11:22–25), making Paul's refusal (15:38) appear more ironic.¹⁵⁰⁷ (Luke omits any role that Barnabas's kinship with Mark may have played; Col 4:10.) Luke might have chosen to omit this split, simply noting that Paul took a new partner;¹⁵⁰⁸ but biographers often did include unpleasant reports about even mostly positive characters.¹⁵⁰⁹ On the level of Acts' theology, however, God's sovereign plan in the outcome may be more important (15:39–40).¹⁵¹⁰

No one disputes the claim in Acts 15:40 that Silas became Paul's major traveling companion (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1). Appealing to Galatians, however, some modern scholars suppose, against Luke's depiction of the Antioch church continuing to approve of Paul (Acts 15:40), that Barnabas and Antioch now rejected Paul's gospel.¹⁵¹¹ Yet Paul's own depiction of a different tension with Barnabas is even subtler than what Luke depicts (note "*even* Barnabas," Gal 2:13), and Paul afterward continues to depict Barnabas favorably (1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:9; Col 4:10). Paul specifies no split; left to Paul's letters alone, we might even suppose that Luke exaggerated a conflict, except that it surely meets the criterion of embarrassment as something Luke would not have invented. What both sources independently attest is tension between the two regarding mission strategy.¹⁵¹²

Paul's new team delivers the decrees *through Syria and Cilicia* (15:41), the original target audience (15:23). Undoubtedly this included ministry in Tarsus (22:3), en route to the Cilician Gates through the Taurus mountains into southern Galatia (16:1).

¹⁵⁰⁷ Also ironically, *separated* (15:39) translates a term cognate to the one used for Mark's own departure in 13:13; if Mark was wrong, so was this new division!

¹⁵⁰⁸ E.g., Plutarch omitted or minimized Caesar's affairs (J. Beneker, "No Time for Love: Plutarch's Chaste Caesar," *GRBS* 43 [1, 2002–3]: 13–29).

¹⁵⁰⁹ E.g., Nepos 11 (Iphicrates), 3.2; Plutarch, *Cimon* 2.4–5; Arrian, *Alex.* 4.7.4; 4.8.1–4.9.6; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.21.602–3.

¹⁵¹⁰ Silas as a Roman citizen and Timothy as half-Greek may have proved more suited to the mission that ensued in Asia than Barnabas and Mark would have been. D. Bauer thus has observed to me that although the conflict is negative, God accomplishes his purposes through limited persons (cf. 13:26) and even sinful actions (e.g., 2:23; cf. Judg 14:4).

¹⁵¹¹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 476.

¹⁵¹² That Paul accuses Barnabas of "hypocrisy" (Gal 2:13) – acting contrary to conviction – suggests fundamental theological agreement. Against the assumption that Paul lost the circumcision debate in Antioch, see Keener, *Galatians* (Baker, 2019), 140–43. Paul, like the Evangelists or composers of controversy narratives, naturally gives himself the final word, although conversation presumably continued; this does not permit us to infer from silence, here or in the Gospels, that the climactic speaker therefore lost the debate!

Scholars who construct Pauline chronology without using Acts inevitably must speculate and thus diverge widely in their estimates. Acts provides some parameters, though even those who use it vary regarding specific estimates. Jewett, for example, concludes that this “missionary journey” took two to four, and probably three to four years.¹⁵¹³ Although his estimates of the time traveling from one location to another are quite helpful, two years is probably sufficient for the events Luke includes.¹⁵¹⁴

16:1–5: REVISITING CHURCHES

In 15:36–39, Paul loses his main traveling companion, in a conflict over a younger, former traveling assistant. In 15:40–41, Paul takes a new major traveling companion (Silas), and in 16:1–3 also adds a new younger assistant, Timothy (cf. 1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 4:12). Unlike Paul’s earlier colleagues, Timothy is half-Greek. But whereas this might be seen by some as an advantage in reaching gentiles, his ambiguous status would please neither Greeks nor Jews, hence Paul seeks to normalize his status.¹⁵¹⁵ In the process, Luke shows the extent to which Paul accommodated Jewish sensitivities such as those that had surfaced at the Jerusalem Council (15:5, 20). If some of Paul’s detractors considered him too inflexible or a cause of a rift with the mother church, Luke would surely have demurred, and expected his Diaspora audience to do the same.

Just as Paul and his colleagues strengthen the churches of Syria–Cilicia in 15:41, they do so in Phrygia in 16:4–5, revisiting churches founded on the last mission (15:36). This region was not part of Syria–Cilicia, to whose conflicts (especially noted in Antioch) the decrees had been addressed (15:23), but their applicability was potentially broader, and Paul may have sought to neutralize any future influence of “Judaizers” in this region. That his epistle to the Galatians suggests that the Judaizers did in fact later

¹⁵¹³ R. Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul’s Life* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 62.

¹⁵¹⁴ A maximum of a year in Philippi, for example, is too long. Given Paul’s mention of working in Thessalonica, we may presume that he stayed there more than three weeks; but given Acts 17:2, need we really assume a minimum of three months? Granted that Paul must have made some disciples in Berea (20:4), would it have taken Paul’s enemies in Thessalonica, two days from Berea, two months to learn of his work there and stir trouble for him (17:13)?

¹⁵¹⁵ Even Luther (*First Lectures on Galatians* on 2:3; 5:6) recognized that Paul opposed not circumcision but its abuse; cf. also Calvin, *Commentary on Galatians* on 5:3; Wolfgang Musculus, *Commentary on Galatians* on 5:2 (from G. Bray).

achieve a position of influence would also suggest that the decrees failed to prevent this.¹⁵¹⁶

A 1,050-meter-high gorge called the Cilician Gates, visible from Tarsus, offered a pass through the Taurus mountains to the north. Passing through these, Paul reaches Derbe before Lystra (16:1; in contrast to the route in 14:6–8, 20). Timothy and his mother (16:1) were probably converted on Paul's previous visits to Lystra (14:8–18, 21; cf. 20:4; 2 Tim 3:11), given Paul's own language for Timothy as his "son" (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22).¹⁵¹⁷

Timothy's good reputation (Acts 16:2) was important for public witness (cf. 6:3; 10:22; 22:12). Possibly the elders (14:23) commissioned him at this time (cf. 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6–7). Early tradition suggests that Timothy's Jewish mother and grandmother were devout and raised him in Scripture (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15);¹⁵¹⁸ that Timothy was not yet circumcised suggests that his gentile father had forbidden it.¹⁵¹⁹

In small Lystra, intermarriages among ethnic groups occurred, especially between Roman colonists and local women.¹⁵²⁰ Most peoples allowed interethnic marriages,¹⁵²¹ but they also warned against diluting their home culture or loyalties.¹⁵²² Peoples rejected the children of some unions as citizens¹⁵²³ or at least as pure-blooded.¹⁵²⁴

Jews usually rejected intermarriage, albeit with varying degrees of vehemence. Although Jewish men's marriages to gentile women were sometimes accepted,¹⁵²⁵ intermarriage was normally detested.¹⁵²⁶ Even a gentile

¹⁵¹⁶ This in turn helps explain why he does not cite them in Galatians, though he also avoids them, and direct dependence on Jerusalem, in his other churches.

¹⁵¹⁷ Cf. Phlm 10. Disciples could also be viewed as their teachers' sons (Eunapius, *Lives* 486, 493; 4 Bar. 7:24; *Sipre Deut.* 34.3.1–3, 5; 305.3.4).

¹⁵¹⁸ Fathers normally bore primary responsibility for sons' Jewish education (Sir 7:23; Wis 3:11–12; 4 Macc 18:9–19; *Let. Aris.* 248), but mothers could step in as needed (Prov 1:8; 6:20; 31:1; *b. Sotah* 21a).

¹⁵¹⁹ Some gentiles viewed it as mutilation (e.g., Plutarch, *Cic.* 7.5). Even some synagogue-attending gentile sympathizers with Judaism balked at circumcision.

¹⁵²⁰ *MAMA* 8.12; *ILS* 2403; Levick, *Colonies*, 191 n. 1.

¹⁵²¹ E.g., Polybius 1.78.8–9; Quintus Curtius 8.4.25; Arrian, *Alex.* 7.4.8.

¹⁵²² Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.1.2; Justin, *Epit.* 43.3.2; Arrian, *Alex.* 7.12.2.

¹⁵²³ Gaius, *Inst.* 1.66–92; J. F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 32, 143.

¹⁵²⁴ E.g., Aeschines, *Embassy* 78; *Ctes.* 172; Lucian, *Parl. G.* 4; Suetonius, *Aug.* 40.3.

¹⁵²⁵ Gen 41:45; Ex 2:21; Ruth 4:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.91–92; 17.20; *War* 1.181.

¹⁵²⁶ E.g., Gen 26:34–35; 27:46, 28:1; Deut 7:3–4; Ezra 9:12, 14; 10:2, 10–11; Neh 10:30; 1 Esd 8:68–96; 9:7–9; Tob 4:12; 2 Bar. 42:4; *Jub.* 20:4; 22:20; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.29; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.344–45, 349. The concern was religious assimilation, not racial; see S. Bar, "Intermarriage in the Biblical Period," *BibT* 45 (2, 2007): 97–104; C. S. Keener, "Interethnic Marriages in the New Testament (Matt 13–6; Acts 7:29; 16:1–3; 1 Cor

king had to be circumcised to marry a Jewish princess (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.145–46). More dramatically, the pre-Christian work *Jubilees* declares religious intermarriage equivalent to sacrificing one's children to Molech (*Jub.* 30:10). It prescribes death for any man who marries off a daughter to gentiles; the daughter should also be burned (*Jub.* 30:7).

Second-century rabbis regarded as Jewish the mixed child of a Jewish mother,¹⁵²⁷ but many first-century communities may have viewed such cases more ambiguously. Given Acts 15:1–2, Timothy (unlike Titus in Gal 2:3–5) appears as at least *sufficiently* Jewish for circumcision to be appropriate (cf. 2 Tim 3:15). At the same time, his (in postcolonial terms) hybrid status fits the way the Spirit is moving in Acts (cf. 7:29).¹⁵²⁸ In practice, the product of a mixed union might be treated as more knowledgeable and sensitive to Judaism than a gentile would (much earlier, cf. 1 Kgs 7:14; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.76).

Against the slander of 21:21, Paul objects only to circumcising gentiles, not Jews (1 Cor 7:18–19; Gal 5:6; 6:15; Phil 3:5); though even here, Luke supplies missionary strategy rather than theology as the reason (Acts 16:3; 1 Cor 9:20).¹⁵²⁹ The strategy was sufficiently important to warrant a procedure known to be painful (Gen 34:25).

The churches were strengthened (16:5) as in 14:22; 15:32, 41; 18:23; believers *increased in numbers* as in 4:4; 6:7; 11:21; *daily* recalls 2:47, showing continuity in the mission; “number” evokes 4:4; 6:7; 11:21.

16:6–10: GOD'S LEADING TO MACEDONIA

As much as they might like to evangelize everywhere, the Spirit that empowers mission guides Paul's team to the most appropriate place. Luke's identification of the Holy Spirit (i.e., God's Spirit)¹⁵³⁰ with the Spirit of

7:14),” *CTR* n.s. 6 (2, 2009): 25–43; for linguistic concerns, K. E. Southwood, “‘And They Could Not Understand Jewish Speech’: Language, Ethnicity, and Nehemiah's Intermarriage Crisis,” *JTS* 62 (1, 2011): 1–19.

¹⁵²⁷ *M. Qidd.* 3:12; *Yebam.* 7:5; *t. Qidd.* 4:16. Rabbinic rules regulating the status of children born to irregular marriages might follow Roman models; cf. B. Cohen, *Jewish and Roman Law: A Comparative Study* (2 vols.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America Press, 1966), 133–36.

¹⁵²⁸ See here esp. Barreto, *Negotiations*, 61–118.

¹⁵²⁹ Cf. Justin, *Dial.* 47; Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.3; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.9; Chrysostom, *Hom. Gal.* 5.11; Rudolf Gwalther, *Sermons on Galatians* on Gal 2:3.

¹⁵³⁰ As in, e.g., Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10–11; Wis 9:17; 1QS 3.7; 8.16; 9.4; *m. Sotah* 9:6; *t. Pesah.* 2:15; 4:14; *Sotah* 13:3; *Mek. Pisha* 1.15off.; *Shirata* 7.17–18.

Jesus (16:6–7) fits Luke’s divine Christology (2:17–18, 33; Luke 3:16).¹⁵³¹ Most ancient audiences respected pious persons who sought to act only on divine guidance,¹⁵³² but the apostles’ dependence on divine guidance here (and in 16:9–10) offers a contrast with pagan “revelation” in the following context (16:16–18).¹⁵³³ Before receiving positive guidance (16:9–10), the missionaries are restrained from going elsewhere (16:6–7). Following God’s direction assured his blessing – an assurance that would prove essential when facing the sufferings that awaited them while breaking new ground in Macedonia.

In 16:6 the missionaries revisit Phrygian Galatia (which included Pisidian Antioch and Iconium)¹⁵³⁴ as they had done in 14:21–25.¹⁵³⁵ Perhaps the Spirit prevents Paul’s ministry in the Roman province of Asia (in western Asia Minor) at this time to prepare him in Greece for his later fruitful ministry there (19:10, 20), given limited opportunity there before pagan reaction would force his relocation (19:30–34; 20:16).

Charismatic guidance inevitably involves some ambiguities (cf. 21:4), though everyone in antiquity was accustomed to sometimes ambiguous divine guidance. Restrained from going elsewhere (16:6–7), Paul’s new mission without Barnabas initially appears to wander aimlessly, circumstances that Luke would not invent and understandably does not elaborate. They may have proceeded north to Dorylaeum; blocked by impassable mountains to the west, they pass through¹⁵³⁶ Mysia to Troas.¹⁵³⁷

¹⁵³¹ Cf. Rom 8:9; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11; M. Turner, “The Spirit of Christ and ‘Divine’ Christology,” pages 413–36 in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ* (ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

¹⁵³² See, e.g., Xenophon, *Anab.* 6.3.18; 6.4.16–25; *Cyr.* 1.5.6, 14; 1.6.2; 1.6.44; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 40; Valerius Maximus 1.2.2; Plutarch, *Arist.* 17.6–18.2; 1 Chron 14:10, 14.

¹⁵³³ Luke does not clarify whether the Spirit’s words came directly (8:29; 10:19), through prophecy (13:1–2), dreams or visions (16:9–10; 18:9), or simply an overwhelming internal sense.

¹⁵³⁴ Luke’s construction probably suggests a single region (cf. 18:23; Luke 3:1), here the Phrygian part of the province of Galatia. This essentially adjectival use of Phrygia is well-attested (see C. J. Hemer, “The Adjective ‘Phrygia,’” *JTS*, n.s., 27 [1, 1976]: 122–26; idem, “Phrygia: A Further Note,” *JTS*, n.s., 28 (1, 1977): 99–101). Northern Galatia was too far north or east of Asia and Mysia to make sense of Acts 16:6–7 (S. Mitchell, “Galatia,” *ABD* 2:870–72 [871]). In contrast to south Galatia, the southern part of north Galatia was too sparsely inhabited, especially by Greek speakers, to provide much opportunity for ministry (S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:96; Riesner, *Early Period*, 282–83).

¹⁵³⁵ In 50 CE, probably since their last visit, Pisidian Antioch had erected a new triumphal arch (S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:10).

¹⁵³⁶ Rather than “passing by,” as in most translations, which would not get them to Troas.

¹⁵³⁷ See more fully C. Breytenbach, “Probable Reasons for Paul’s Unfruitful Missionary Attempts in Asia Minor (A Note on Acts 16:6–7),” pages 157–69 in Breytenbach and Schröter, *Apostelgeschichte*.

Prosperous Alexandria Troas (16:8), a Roman colony since Augustus, was the Troad's largest city in the hellenistic and Roman periods, estimated by some to have even a hundred thousand inhabitants.¹⁵³⁸ Greek and Roman cultures here divided sharply in their interests.¹⁵³⁹ At some point, whether here or in 19:10 or (likelier) 20:1, Paul helped start a church at Troas (20:6–8; 2 Cor 2:12).

A Closer Look: The Troad and Asia

Alexandria Troas was 10 or 15 miles south-southwest from Ilium, Homer's Troy (which featured in Greek antiquity's most widely learned work, the *Iliad*), from which Rome's ancestor Aeneas allegedly came (celebrated especially in Rome's favored epic, Virgil's *Aeneid*).

This geography might evoke ideas for a northern Mediterranean audience that Luke prudently refrains from highlighting. Troy traditionally guarded the Hellespont, the traditional Greek boundary between Asia and Europe;¹⁵⁴⁰ Alexander's crossing the Hellespont also was viewed as marking his entrance into Asia from Europe.¹⁵⁴¹ Greeks and Romans viewed the legendary Trojan War as a clash between Europe and Asia,¹⁵⁴² and Alexander's invasion of Persia (starting at Troy) as a European conquest of Asia;¹⁵⁴³ the latter invasion supposedly evoked the former.¹⁵⁴⁴ Greeks, followed by Romans, divided their world especially into Europe, Asia, and often Africa.¹⁵⁴⁵

But whereas Greek cultures invaded Asia in the era of the *Iliad* and Alexander of Macedon, now the gospel, born in Asia, crosses from Asia to Europe. Some Romans compared eastern cults to Syrian refuse (Juvenal,

¹⁵³⁸ C. J. Hemer, "Alexandria Troas," *TynBul* 26 (1975): 79–112 (87–88).

¹⁵³⁹ Hemer, "Troas," 92–93.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Lysias, *Or.* 2.28, §193; Polybius 4.46.1; Varro, *Latin Language* 7.2.21.

¹⁵⁴¹ Polybius 3.6.4; Justin, *Epit.* 11.5.10–6; 12.16.5; Menander Rhetor 2.17, 444.4–5.

¹⁵⁴² Virgil, *Aen.* 7.224; Ovid, *Am.* 2.12.18; Apollodorus, *Epit.* 3.1; Maximus of Tyre 35.4; cf. even the Argonauts versus Colchis (Valerius Flaccus 8.396).

¹⁵⁴³ Livy 9.16.19; Quintus Curtius 4.1.38; Plutarch, *Alex.* 9.5.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Alex.* 15.4; Philostratus, *Hrk.* 53.16.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Aeschines, *Ctes.* 250; Thucydides 2.97.6; Sallust, *Jug.* 17.3–4; Livy 34.58.2–3; Pliny, *Nat.* 3.1.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 4.49; Philo, *Mos.* 2.20. Greeks and Romans counted Persia as "Asia" (Aeschylus, *Pers.* 73), Persian attacks on Greece as Asian designs on Europe (Lysias, *Or.* 2.21, §192; 2.28, §193; Nepos 1 (Miltiades), 3.4; 17 (Agessilaus), 2.1), and their defeats after invading Greece as Europe's triumph over Asia (Thucydides 1.89.2; Valerius Maximus 6.9. ext. 2; Nepos 2 [Themistocles], 5.3). European Gauls fared more poorly against Asia's Troad in Polybius 5.11.1–7.

Sat. 3.62); nonviolent followers of an executed leader would need God's Spirit to help them.

Romans did appreciate another association of Troy, however. Roman poets could associate Troy with Rome by means of Aeneas,¹⁵⁴⁶ and the mid-first-century emperor Claudius exempted Troy from tribute because its refugees supposedly founded Rome (Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.3). Though Rome was thus viewed as nursed by Europe (Pliny, *Nat.* 3.1.5), it claimed Asian ancestry. ****

Paul had many revelations (2 Cor 12:1–9); this one may not be dramatic, but it at least provides clear guidance.¹⁵⁴⁷ Often dreams were called night “visions,” as in 16:9; 18:9.¹⁵⁴⁸ Dreams during REM sleep and sleepwalking appear on a continuum of altered states of consciousness. People often believed that dreams conveyed divine messages, including in Greece and Macedonia,¹⁵⁴⁹ Rome,¹⁵⁵⁰ and among Judean¹⁵⁵¹ and Diaspora Jews.¹⁵⁵² Military leaders might depend on dreams before battles, probably both in reality and later embellishments;¹⁵⁵³ so might someone propagating a cult.¹⁵⁵⁴

Still, people realized that not all dreams were divine revelations,¹⁵⁵⁵ and skeptics dismissed most of them;¹⁵⁵⁶ some dreams were even considered divine deceptions.¹⁵⁵⁷ But even true dreams could be misinterpreted.¹⁵⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴⁶ E.g., Justin, *Epit.* 31.8.1–3; Nicolaus, *Aug.* 20; Silius Italicus 1.42, 126; 3.207; 8.199; 9.348.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Potential parallels are many: dreams in Troy (Plutarch, *Luc.* 10.3) or concerning Philippi (Valerius Maximus 1.7.1), or destructively summoning Persian leaders to invade Greece (Herodotus 7.12–19); but these appear among a vast range of ancient dream reports. Some believed that they saw superhuman figures, sometimes in dreams, that represented the spirit of a locale (Pliny, *Ep.* 7.27.2; Suetonius, *Claud.* 1.2; Philostratus, *V.A.* 4.34).

¹⁵⁴⁸ E.g., Plutarch, *Alex.* 41.3; 49.3; *Caes.* 42.1; 68.2; *Cim.* 18.3–4; *Demosth.* 29.2; Gen 46:2; Job 4:13; 20:8; 33:15; Dan 2:19; 7:2, 7, 13; 1 *En.* 90:40; 1Q20 21.8.

¹⁵⁴⁹ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 1.63; 5.150; Euripides, *Philoctetes* frg. 789b.3; Xenophon, *Anab.* 3.1.11; 4.3.8; 6.1.22; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 11.9.56; 12.12.83; Artemidorus, *Onir.* passim.

¹⁵⁵⁰ E.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.14; Marcus Aurelius 1.17.8.

¹⁵⁵¹ Josephus, *War* 1.328; 2.116; *Life* 208–210; 1 *En.* 13.8; 85:1; 90:42; 4 *Ezra* 11:1.

¹⁵⁵² *Let. Aris.* 192, 315; Ezekiel, *Exag.* 68–89; *Sib. Or.* 3.293; Philo, *Migr.* 190.

¹⁵⁵³ E.g., Polybius 10.4.5–10.5.5; Valerius Maximus 1.7.1; Plutarch, *Alex.* 24.3; 41.3–4; 49.3; *Sulla* 9.4; 28.6; *Caes.* 42.1; *Judg* 7:13–15.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Justin, *Epit.* 44.5.2; Strabo 4.1.4.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Homer, *Od.* 19.560–65; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.18.2–5; Plutarch, *M. Cato* 23.4; Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.1; 11Q19 54.8; Sir 34:1–8; *Let. Aris.* 213–16; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.207–8.

¹⁵⁵⁶ E.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 10.98.211; see further esp. J. B. F. Miller, *Convinced that God Had Called Us: Dreams, Visions, and the Perception of God's Will in Luke-Acts* (BibInt 85; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 29–36.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Homer, *Il.* 2.20–21; Virgil, *Aen.* 5.893–96; *Vit. Aes.* 33; *P. Paris.* 47.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Quintus Curtius 3.3.4–5; Plutarch, *Alex.* 18.4; Fronto, *De Bello Parthico* 6.

While some true dreams might be interpreted easily,¹⁵⁵⁹ others required an interpretation.¹⁵⁶⁰ Some people depended on professional dream interpreters¹⁵⁶¹ or folk wisdom regarding dream symbols.¹⁵⁶² But dream interpretation was a divine gift (Gen 40:8; Dan 1:17), so the believers here corporately (cf. 1 Cor 14:29), including the “we” author, interpret Paul’s dream (Acts 16:10).

A Closer Look: Luke’s “We” Material

Here I can present only a brief synopsis of material treated elsewhere.¹⁵⁶³ On several occasions, the narrator indicates his presence with the group by using the first-person plural (16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16). These appearances are hardly random; yet instead of the most “important” or exotic scenes (where a fictitious witness might be expected to insert oneself), they exhibit geographic continuity (as one would expect for a genuine witness), from Troas to Philippi (16:10–16); Philippi to Jerusalem (20:6–21:18); and Judea to Rome (27:1–28:16).¹⁵⁶⁴ Because the action focuses on Paul but not his companions in 21:19–26:32, but the “we” resumes when his companions in the same region are again described, there is reason to believe that the person included in the “we” remains in Judea throughout the up-to-two-year interim period (especially given the likely unexpectedness of Paul’s departure schedule).¹⁵⁶⁵

It is no coincidence that the we-narratives provide the most detailed accounts in Acts: the missionaries’ brief time in Philippi receives more detailed attention than eighteen months in Corinth and as much as two years in Asia (18:11; 19:10); Paul’s two years in Judea (21:17–27:1) are the most detailed portion of the book.¹⁵⁶⁶

¹⁵⁵⁹ E.g., Plutarch, *Demosth.* 29.2.

¹⁵⁶⁰ E.g., Plutarch, *Cim.* 18.3.

¹⁵⁶¹ E.g., Aeschylus, *Lib.* 37–41; Suetonius, *Jul.* 7.2. Later rabbis treated dreams like obscure riddles (y. *Ma’as.* S. 4:6, §5).

¹⁵⁶² Dream interpretation handbooks appear by the early second millennium BCE; for the Roman period, see Artemidorus, *Onir.*

¹⁵⁶³ See Keener, *Acts*, 3:2350–74; idem, “First-Person Claims in Some Ancient Historians and Acts,” *JGRCJ* 10 (2014): 9–23.

¹⁵⁶⁴ With others, e.g., Dibelius, *Studies*, 136; Fitzmyer, *Theologian*, 11–16.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Luke sometimes focuses on Paul even when we know that others accompanied him; note the mention of only Paul’s movement in 15:41–16:1, even though Silas was with him (15:40).

¹⁵⁶⁶ Luke’s geography is also more complete in the locations where he traveled; see, e.g., B. Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah and Sites of the Early Church from Galilee to Jerusalem* (ed. R. Riesner; San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010), 423–32.

Readers would accept a first-person claim in almost any other ancient historical text.¹⁵⁶⁷ Ancient historians considered most reliable those authors who participated in events,¹⁵⁶⁸ and Luke's preface might imply such a participatory claim (Luke 1:3).¹⁵⁶⁹ A majority of scholars do in fact accept that the "we" represents either the author or his source.¹⁵⁷⁰

Less convincingly, some scholars argue that the "we" is a fictitious literary device. But while fictitious first-person claims naturally figure in fictitious works, no such literary device appears in historical monographs.¹⁵⁷¹ That is, the status of a first-person claim normally comports with the genre in which it appears: the subject of first-person narration in factually rooted accounts purports to be the genuine subject of the action thus narrated. Nor does the narrator insert himself merely to gain attention for himself: "we" appears fairly rarely, and there it economizes words better than listing named participants would.¹⁵⁷² If Luke wanted to insert himself fictitiously to gain credibility, why does he not rank himself among major witnesses (Luke 1:2–3), or appear at key moments such as the empty tomb or Pentecost?

Some suggest that the "we" narrator is not the author of Luke-Acts, but his source for the material in question. So detailed are its travel itineraries that many scholars contend that Luke uses a travel journal here.¹⁵⁷³

¹⁵⁶⁷ Emphasized already by Nock, *Essays*, 821–32, esp. 827–28; also others, e.g., H. J. Cadbury, "‘We’ and ‘I’ Passages in Luke-Acts," *NTS* 3 (2, 1957): 128–32; Dupont, *Sources*, 167–68; A. D. Baum, "Autobiografische Wir- und Er-Stellungen in den neutestamentlichen Geschichtsbüchern im Kontext der antiken Literaturgeschichte," *Bib* 88 (4, 2007): 473–95. See, e.g., Herodotus 2.127.2; Polybius 36.11.1–4; 39.8.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.7.3; Josephus, *Life* 1–6; Suetonius, *Aug.* 7; *Cal.* 19; *Otho* 10; *Dom.* 12; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.21.602–4; Ezra 8:31–32. Cf. Philostratus in Hägg, *Biography*, 349.

¹⁵⁶⁸ See, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 6; Josephus, *Life* 357; *Ag. Ap.* 1.45–49, 56; Byrskog, *Story*, 153–57; E. Plümacher, *Geschichte und Geschichten* (WUNT 170; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 85–108.

¹⁵⁶⁹ See Moessner, *Historian*, 68–107, esp. 106–7, 328.

¹⁵⁷⁰ W. S. Campbell, "The Narrator as ‘He,’ ‘Me,’ and ‘We’: Grammatical Person in Ancient Histories and in the Acts of the Apostles," *JBL* 129 (2, 2010): 385–407 (386), notes this, although differing from the position himself. For a full survey of views, see J. Wehnert, *Die Wir-Passagen der Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 47–124.

¹⁵⁷¹ The same may be said for the more specific proposal of "we" narration in sea voyages, even apart from occurrences in Acts not at sea (16:10, 12–16; 20:7–8; 21:7–17; 28:14–16). Most scholars reject the literary fiction approach (W. S. Campbell, "Narrator," 387–88; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 24–27).

¹⁵⁷² Historians often named themselves in the third person (sometimes in addition to first person), but Acts' narrator remains inconspicuous, maintaining focus on Paul.

¹⁵⁷³ E.g., Barrett, *Acts*, xxvii–xxx; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 10–46.

But whereas Luke has many sources (Luke 1:2), only here does first-person narration occur; unless Luke became an inept editor with this and only this source, it seems likeliest that if Luke used any travel journal, it was his own. The style and vocabulary also matches that of Luke elsewhere (especially his other itineraries).¹⁵⁷⁴

Many scholars question Luke's claim not because they have a particularly plausible explanation for the "we" but because they doubt, for various reasons, that Luke was actually Paul's traveling companion. But a traveling companion need not have known intimately all aspects of Paul's mind most familiar to readers of Paul's occasional letters (see introduction). Even eyewitness informants interpreted events through their biases (Thucydides 1.22.2–3), and could diverge on public details they all knew about (Arrian, *Alex.* 4.14.3).

The simplest solution is often the best, and the most obvious solution is sometimes the simplest. Historians most frequently depicted their participation within narratives in the third person, but when first-person claims occur, on whatever level, they do include the author. The verbs in Luke's "we" narratives explicitly depict the narrator within the narrative. ****

16:11–15: LYDIA AND HER HOUSE CHURCH

Ministry in Philippi (16:12–40) represents a new stage in Paul's mission. Since leaving Antioch, Paul and his new companions have mostly ministered among churches earlier founded by Paul and Barnabas (perhaps through prior contacts), until facing closed doors in new regions.¹⁵⁷⁵ Now Paul's dream (16:9) has led them to minister in Macedonia – a sense of call that must sustain them when, after an outwardly small success with a handful of marginal converts, they quickly face public judicial persecution.

Lukan themes in 16:11–40 include ministry to the socially marginal (16:13); a spiritual power encounter (16:16–18) challenging vested economic interests (16:19–21; cf. 19:25–27); and persecution for preaching the gospel (16:22–23).

Luke is likely a firsthand witness to most of the events in Philippi (see A Closer Look at 16:10). Paul's own letters attest that he faced unusual hostility in Macedonia, in both Philippi and Thessalonica, in contrast to

¹⁵⁷⁴ With, e.g., Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 99–100; Dibelius, *Studies*, 104, 136 ("so similar in fact that we have no justification for attributing them to different authors").

¹⁵⁷⁵ They may have founded a church in Troas (but perhaps later; Acts 20:6; 2 Cor 2:12), but Luke is silent about that or any other new mission successes on this journey so far.

Achaia. Like Luke, Paul notes that he was abused in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2), mentions miracles as well as beatings in his missionary work (Rom 15:18–19; 2 Cor 12:13; cf. Gal 3:5), and mentions beatings with rods (2 Cor 11:25). Moreover, if Philippi constituted a significant part of Luke's audience, he would not dare fabricate a foundation story contrary to their own communal memory. Focusing on narrative action, however, Luke may condense the events of Paul's sojourn (cf. *some days*, 16:12).

The first reported convert of the Macedonian mission was from Asia and already feared the God of Israel (16:14). Starting where the missionaries had points of contact was good sense. Ironically, persecution creates the setting for Paul's first reported Macedonian convert (16:28–34).

Since passenger ships did not exist, passengers boarded any ships heading their direction.¹⁵⁷⁶ Ancient writers often included travel reports (e.g., Cicero, *Att.* 5.12); historians used them to connect narratives and prevent obscurity (Polybius 1.41.6–1.42.7; 5.21.7–9). Alexandria Troas's large artificial harbor offered the first adequate harbor close to the southern edge of the Hellespont.¹⁵⁷⁷ The sea route between Troas and Neapolis, which was over 150 miles, would have been among the busiest.¹⁵⁷⁸ The rapid transit in 16:11 suggests a favorable wind (contrast early spring winds in 20:6).¹⁵⁷⁹

The prosperous island Samothrace (16:11), halfway between Troas and Neapolis, offered a natural landmark (Mount Fengari, the Aegean's highest mountain). The ship probably harbored overnight at the city of Samothrace, on the island's northern coast.¹⁵⁸⁰

Neapolis (16:11) was one of Macedonia's best ports, and a 10–12 mile walk from Philippi. It stood at the eastern end of the *Via Egnatia*,¹⁵⁸¹ a road now

¹⁵⁷⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 209; see, e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.6.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Hemer, "Troas," 87. Ancients constructed artificial harbors only when necessary (Vitruvius, *Arch.* 5.12.1–2).

¹⁵⁷⁸ See Hemer, "Troas," 91–92.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 279–81; Cicero, *Att.* 5.12–13.

¹⁵⁸⁰ On Samothrace, see K. Lehmann and P. Williams Lehmann, eds., *Samothrace: Excavations Conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University* (11 vols.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958–98); more briefly, Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 125–32. It was particularly known for its sacred mysteries (e.g., Strabo 10.3.19–21; S. G. Cole, *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace* [ÉPROER 96; Leiden: Brill, 1984]; N. M. Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates in Samothrace: The Epigraphical Evidence* [Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2008]; R. L. Mowery, "Theoroi and Initiates in Samothrace," *Biblica* 92 [1, 2011]: 112–22).

¹⁵⁸¹ At least apart from the stretch from Troas north to Lampsacus, across the Hellespont; see D. French, "Acts and the Roman Roads of Asia Minor," pages 49–58 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 54.

roughly two centuries old and a major link between Italy and Asia Minor. This road proceeded westward through Philippi to Apollonia (17:1), and then to Dyrrhachium on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, from which travelers could voyage by ship to Rome. Many scholars believe that by starting on the Via Egnatia, Paul was already signaling his interest in Rome.

Although the team could have easily transferred to another ship heading on to Macedonia's large capital, Thessalonica, they walked inland to Philippi (16:12), an agricultural town of roughly five to fifteen thousand residents.¹⁵⁸² Despite the city's natural wealth from nearby mines (Strabo 7. frg. 34, Pliny, *Nat.* 37.15.57), poverty was widespread in Macedonia (cf. 2 Cor 8:2),¹⁵⁸³ with significant disparity between rich and poor.

Philippi was, however, like Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, and Troas, a Roman colony, making Philippi's citizens also citizens of Rome.¹⁵⁸⁴ Despite its location, some 80 percent of Philippi's inscriptions are in Latin, nearly twice the figure for Pisidian Antioch: this was a colony that took its Romanitas very seriously. It was also *a leading city of the district* (16:12).¹⁵⁸⁵ Luke shows special interest in this city (16:12–40), where he himself apparently remained for the better part of a decade (20:6).

If Paul and his colleagues were to start with the Jewish community as previously (13:5, 14), they would have to find it first. They would quickly learn that no synagogue existed in the city, but they may have heard that some people practiced Jewish customs outside the city (apparently not common here – cf. 16:20–21). Jews and God-fearers regularly assembled on Sabbaths (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.175), and, in the absence of a synagogue, they would most often assemble near water,¹⁵⁸⁶ necessary for ritually purifying their hands.¹⁵⁸⁷

¹⁵⁸² Further on Philippi, see W. Elliger, *Paulus in Griechenland: Philippi, Thessaloniki, Athen, Korinth* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1978), 23–77.

¹⁵⁸³ See H. D. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 43, citing inscriptions.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Luke's specific mention of Philippi's Roman status in this instance (16:12) prepares for 16:20–21, 37–38; cf. Phil 3:20. Perhaps just 30 percent of its residents were citizens (R. S. Ascoug, *Lydia: Paul's Cosmopolitan Hostess* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2009], 25–26).

¹⁵⁸⁵ Some have taken Luke's *leading* to mean "chief," but Luke often uses this Greek term more generally to designate prominence (cf. 13:50; 17:4; 25:2; 28:7, 17); cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 35.13; 43.1.

¹⁵⁸⁶ See Philo, *Flacc.* 122; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.258; *Mek. Pisha* 1.64. Synagogues in one Egyptian town consumed roughly double the amount of water as the local baths (*CPI* 2:220–24, §434).

¹⁵⁸⁷ See Sanders, *Jesus to Mishnah*, 260; and, e.g., Jdt 12:7–8; *Jub.* 21:16; *Let. Aris.* 305; *Sib. Or.* 3.591–93; *m. Yad.* 1:1–2:4; Mark 7:2–4. Cf. gentiles in, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 6.266; 9.171; *Od.* 2.260–61; Virgil, *Aen.* 2.717–20.

Scholars sometimes identify the *river* of Acts 16:13 with the much-frequented Krenides creek, just outside the town, or an older stream bed just outside Philippi's eastern, Neapolis gate. Because neither was a "river" (though Luke could use the term more broadly), scholars most frequently identify it with the somewhat more distant Gangites, a tributary of the Strymon.¹⁵⁸⁸ It was about 1.25 miles, or about 2.4 kilometers, west of the city, near a gate marking the pomerium's boundary.¹⁵⁸⁹

The term translated *place of prayer* (16:13) often (though not in Acts) meant a synagogue,¹⁵⁹⁰ though in this case no special building is present.¹⁵⁹¹ (Luke most often uses *supposed* for what turns out to be false.) Since "we" (including the narrator) spoke, the interchange here was probably fairly conversational, as in household setting.

Given elite criticisms of movements associated with women,¹⁵⁹² the apologetic historian Luke would not likely invent this scene. If the first convert Luke mentions in Cyprus is the governor; he would hardly invent Lydia as Macedonia's first convert. Still, unlike many contemporaries (but perhaps fitting in Macedonia), Luke highlights women, including converts (5:14; 8:12; 17:4, 12) and as disciples (9:36; cf. 1:14; 8:3; Luke 10:38–42; 23:49, 55) and supporters (Luke 8:2–3).

A Closer Look: Women and Prayer

In Macedonia and Rome (and thus especially in Roman Philippi), women exercised more independence than in more traditional hellenistic settings (note their prominence in Macedonia also in 17:4, 12). Even Greeks allowed

¹⁵⁸⁸ The Strymon was well-known even outside the area (Apollodorus, *Bib.* 2.5.10; Statius, *Silv.* 5.1.3; Plutarch, *Cim.* 7.1–3).

¹⁵⁸⁹ The walk at least was beautiful, reportedly with hundred-petaled roses (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 15.682B).

¹⁵⁹⁰ Josephus, *Life* 277; *CPJ* 1:239–40, §129.5; 1:247–49, §134.18, 29; *CJ* 1:495, §683; 1:497, §684; 2:367, §1440; 2:368, §1441; 2:369, §1442; 2:370–71, §1443; 2:371, §1444; 2:375–76, §1449; Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.296.

¹⁵⁹¹ Nor is the quorum suggested as necessary in later sources (cf. *m. Sanh.* 1:6; *Abot* 3:6).

¹⁵⁹² Very conservative circles might consider it offensive for a man even to speak with a woman under most circumstances (Euripides, *El.* 343–44; Theophrastus, *Char.* 28.3; Livy 34.2.9; 34.4.18; *m. Abot* 1:5; *Ketub.* 7:6; *t. Sabb.* 1:14; *b. Erub.* 53b; cf. Sir 9:9), though this group setting and usual synagogue settings make this scene unproblematic.

women more freedom in cultic activity, and women held prominent roles in the cult of Diana at Philippi.¹⁵⁹³

On average, gentile women proved more attracted to Judaism than were men (Josephus, *War* 2.560–61; *Ant.* 20.34–35).¹⁵⁹⁴ A disproportionate number of proselytes and especially God-fearers in surviving inscriptions are women.¹⁵⁹⁵ Wives were expected to adopt their husbands' religion,¹⁵⁹⁶ and Roman men sometimes complained about foreign cults' influences on Roman women.¹⁵⁹⁷ Adversaries of Jesus's movement also highlighted its association with women.^{1598 ****}

Like many residents of Philippi, Lydia does not appear to be a Philip-pian/Roman citizen. She hails from Thyatira, a Lydian city; slaves were often named, and some free persons nicknamed, by their geographic provenance (though Lydia was also a common name, including within Lydia. Thyatira had a Jewish community,¹⁵⁹⁹ and some Jews in Asia Minor were prominent in dyers guilds.¹⁶⁰⁰ Thyatira was known for dyes and dyer guilds, attested by at least seven inscriptions (e.g., *CIG* 3496ff.).¹⁶⁰¹ Dyeing, including with purple, was common in Lydia,¹⁶⁰² and inscriptions attest Thyatiran purple dyers and dealers in Philippi.¹⁶⁰³

People were commonly named by their occupation (e.g., 9:43; 10:1; *ILS* 7558; 7580), as here. Most textiles were produced in homes, and most

¹⁵⁹³ V. A. Abrahamsen, "The Rock Reliefs and the Cult of Diana at Philippi" (ThD dissertation, Harvard University, 1986); idem, "Women at Philippi: The Pagan and Christian Evidence," *JFSR* 3 (2, 1987): 17–30.

¹⁵⁹⁴ See further Reimer, *Women*, 97–98; S. Heine, *Women and Early Christianity: A Reappraisal* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1987), 83–84.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 256; Riesner, *Early Period*, 351; similarly, Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 25.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Plutarch, *Bride* 19, *Mor.* 140D; D. L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 99; but see 1 Cor 7:12–16; 1 Pet 3:1.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Livy 39.18.9; Valerius Maximus 1.3.1; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.489, 511–29; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.66–80. For Judaism, see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81–84; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.542–47.

¹⁵⁹⁸ M. Y. MacDonald, "Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity," pages 157–84 in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (ed. D. L. Balch and C. Osiek; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 184.

¹⁵⁹⁹ *CIJ* 2:17–18, §752; Kraabel, "Judaism in Asia Minor," 155–97.

¹⁶⁰⁰ A. T. Kraabel, "The Synagogue and the Jewish Community: Impact," pages 178–90 in *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times* (ed. G. M. A. Hanfmann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 181, citing *CIJ* 775, 777.

¹⁶⁰¹ Reimer, *Women*, 99–100, claims that Thyatira "was renowned for its purple-dyeworks."

¹⁶⁰² Homer, *Il.* 4.141–42; Pliny, *Nat.* 7.56.195; Charlesworth, *Trade Routes*, 94.

¹⁶⁰³ *IG* 10.2.1.291 (though reconstructed); *CIL* 3.664.1; cited in Hemer, *Acts in History*, 114–15; D. W. J. Gill, "Acts and the Urban Élites," pages 105–18 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 115; Ascough, *Lydia*, 80.

business was local, but large businesses also had trade agents abroad. Many women were involved in business (possibly including Rom 16:1–2; 1 Cor 1:11),¹⁶⁰⁴ including as (sometimes Jewish) merchants in the eastern empire.¹⁶⁰⁵ Many purple dye merchants in Rome were freedwomen in this period;¹⁶⁰⁶ freedwomen in the east also frequently sold luxury items such as purple dye.¹⁶⁰⁷

Purple-dyeing was malodorous, but Luke identifies Lydia only as a seller; dyed fabrics might be shipped for her to sell.¹⁶⁰⁸ Wholesalers were often slaves and freedpersons,¹⁶⁰⁹ but even slaves could control considerable wealth as business agents,¹⁶¹⁰ and purple dealers could achieve considerable status.¹⁶¹¹ The overhead expenses of imports required some means, whether the means were hers or those of owners in Thyatira. She owns a home large enough to host Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke without displacing her “household” (16:15), which may well include servants.

Although citizens could look down on resident aliens such as Lydia, significant income afforded a different sort of status.¹⁶¹² Elites despised most trades, but Lydia was probably economically secure.¹⁶¹³ Only 1.5–5 percent of Philippi’s residents were elite; Lydia belonged instead to the estimated 30–45 percent of the population, mostly free Greeks, employed in services.¹⁶¹⁴

¹⁶⁰⁴ J. F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 233–37. For purple dealers, 238–39; Barrett, *Acts*, 782, cites *CIG* 2519.

¹⁶⁰⁵ J. M. Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 73–82; see comment on Acts 18:3.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Gardner, *Women*, 238–39; *NewDocs* 2:27, §3.

¹⁶⁰⁷ W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 24.

¹⁶⁰⁸ For the transport of luxury goods, see Casson, *Mariners*, 198–206; R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 352–66.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Reimer, *Women*, 105–9. For freedpersons in business, see, e.g., *ILS* 7486.

¹⁶¹⁰ E.g., Cicero, *Fam.* 13.45.1. Slave women (and of course freedwomen) could act as managers just as slave men could (Gardner, *Women*, 233).

¹⁶¹¹ Gill, “Élites,” 114–15 (citing an example from Hierapolis in Phrygia).

¹⁶¹² On status inconsistency, see, e.g., G. E. Lenski, “Status Crystallization: A Non-vertical Dimension of Social Status,” *AmSocRev* 19 (1954): 405–13.

¹⁶¹³ Luke frequently reports the conversions of people of some means (8:27–39; 13:12; 18:7–8; Luke 19:8–9; 23:50–52). Some women of at least moderate means appear in first-century Diaspora churches (1 Tim 2:9; 1 Pet 3:3).

¹⁶¹⁴ Ascough, *Lydia*, 25–26.

A Closer Look: Purple¹⁶¹⁵

Sources for purple included Lydia, Phrygia, Egypt, and even Macedonia's Philippi and Thessalonica.¹⁶¹⁶ Near Philippi, Thessalonica hosted purple mollusks and dyeing.¹⁶¹⁷ Ancient sources associate purple especially and most prestigiously, with Tyre.¹⁶¹⁸

Because Lydia was from Thyatira, it is possible that her dye is from the madder plant in Asia Minor or kermes insect rather than from the murex shellfish.¹⁶¹⁹ Whatever the case with Lydia historically, however, Luke's audience will probably assume that Luke associates "purple" with wealth (as in Luke 16:19).

Purple had a long history as a status symbol in antiquity.¹⁶²⁰ Purple often appears together with gold as signs of wealth,¹⁶²¹ and rulers naturally wore it.¹⁶²² It symbolized great wealth,¹⁶²³ and, for some writers, excessive extravagance.¹⁶²⁴ Some philosophers critiqued its extravagance.¹⁶²⁵ The wealthy paid over 1,000 denarii for a pound of the finest Tyrian wool.¹⁶²⁶ Purple silk sold for more than twelve times the price of white silk, and roughly two thousand times the price of Tarentine wool.¹⁶²⁷ Phoenicians

¹⁶¹⁵ Condensed from Keener, *Acts*, 3:2399–2402.

¹⁶¹⁶ E.g., Horace, *Ode* 2.18.7–8; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.1.12; 9.60.127; *NewDocs* 2:25, §3; Charlesworth, *Trade Routes*, 125.

¹⁶¹⁷ Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 46.

¹⁶¹⁸ Horace, *Sat.* 2.4.84; Virgil, *Aen.* 4.262; *Georg.* 3.17, 307; Petronius, *Sat.* 30; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.17.76; Martial, *Epig.* 2.29.3; 8.10; 8.48.1.

¹⁶¹⁹ W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 325–26; E. M. Yamauchi, *The Archaeology of New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 54. This reddish dye could be mixed with blue. Cf. Vitruvius, *Arch.* 7.14.1; Ovid, *Metam.* 6.8–9; *Tristia* 1.1.5; Pliny, *Nat.* 21.22.45.

¹⁶²⁰ See M. Reinhold, *The History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels: Revue d'Études Latines, 1970); R. J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology* (9 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1955–64), 4:114–22.

¹⁶²¹ E.g., Lucretius, *Nat.* 5.1423; Justin, *Epit.* 18.7.9; Seneca, *Dial.* 12.11.2; Apuleius, *Metam.* 10.20; 1 Macc 10:20; 14:43; Josephus, *War* 1.671; 7.134, 137.

¹⁶²² E.g., Homer, *Il.* 8.221; Polybius 10.26.1; Horace, *Ode* 1.35.12; Suetonius, *Nero* 32.3; 1 Macc 10:62–64.

¹⁶²³ E.g., Vitruvius, *Architecture* 7.13.1; Horace, *Ode* 2.18.7–8; Livy 27.4.10; Petronius, *Sat.* 38, 54; Seneca, *Phaed.* 387–88; Pliny, *Nat.* 9.60.124; Martial, *Epig.* 4.28.2; 5.8.5; 8.48.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.191; *Sib. Or.* 8.74.

¹⁶²⁴ E.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 9.53.104–5; Plutarch, *T.-T.* 3.1.2, *Mor.* 646B; Lucian, *True Story* 2.12; Juvenal, *Sat.* 1.27. Cf. the "Tyrian cloak" for 10,000 sesterces in Martial, *Epig.* 8.10.

¹⁶²⁵ Seneca, *Dial.* 12.11.2; *Ep. Lucil.* 69.4; Musonius Rufus 20, p. 124.15; Ps.-Lucian, *Cynic* 11.

¹⁶²⁶ L. Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire* (4 vols.; London: Routledge, 1908–13), 2:175.

¹⁶²⁷ J. Toner, *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 137.

extracted dye by crushing shellfish to collect their fluids.¹⁶²⁸ Given the consequent foul odor and texture associated with such purple dyes,¹⁶²⁹ desire for status was the primary motivation for acquiring purple. ****

Although some of the other women in 16:14 probably also became believers (cf. 16:16a; Phil 4:2), Luke focuses especially on Lydia, whose converted household (16:15a) hosts them (following the pattern in Luke 10:5–7). Although her home could be in an apartment building of the sort common in Rome, her ability to host Paul's group (and thus to include separate quarters for men and women) may suggest that she owned a freestanding house.¹⁶³⁰

Though far less commonly than men, women often owned property.¹⁶³¹ Given criticisms of women's support¹⁶³² or crossgender association,¹⁶³³ and Luke's apologetic interest, his silence about Lydia's husband might perhaps suggest that there is no husband to mention: i.e., that she is single, possibly a divorcee¹⁶³⁴ or widow.¹⁶³⁵ Her household may consist of workers¹⁶³⁶ or servants. Women appear as patrons of guilds and as benefactresses,¹⁶³⁷ and sometimes as patronesses of synagogues¹⁶³⁸ (see also comment on 13:50).¹⁶³⁹

¹⁶²⁸ See Pliny, *Nat.* 5.17.76; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 3.88. Because these shellfish secrete purple only when alive, they were often crushed while alive (Pliny, *Nat.* 9.60.126); their purple liquid dried rapidly unless mixed with honey (Vitruvius, *Arch.* 7.13.3).

¹⁶²⁹ Croom, *Clothing*, 23.

¹⁶³⁰ See Ascough, *Lydia*, 29–33. For women managing households well, see, e.g., Philodemus, *Prop. Col.* 2.3–9; cf. Prov 31:10–31, esp. 31:11–12, 23.

¹⁶³¹ E.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.22.55; *CIL* 6.10230; *NewDocs* 4, p. 93, §21; Arlandson, *Women*, 69–73; esp. R. P. Saller, "Pater Familias, Mater Familias, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household," *CP* 94 (2, 1999): 182–97.

¹⁶³² Cf., e.g., T. Ilan, "The Attraction of Aristocratic Women to Pharisaism during the Second Temple Period," *HTR* 88 (1, 1995): 1–33; Liefeld, "Preacher," 239–40.

¹⁶³³ Isaeus, *Philoct.* 21; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.31.81; *Cael.* 20.49; *Att.* 1.13; Plutarch, *Caes.* 10.6.

¹⁶³⁴ *NewDocs* 4, pp. 87–93, §21.

¹⁶³⁵ See Ascough, *Lydia*, 35–45.

¹⁶³⁶ Reimer, *Women*, 111: mostly women workers. At some point at least some males must have also converted, given the Greek term *adelphous* in 16:40.

¹⁶³⁷ Gardner, *Women*, 239–40; M. R. Lefkowitz and M. B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 24, §48; 243–44, §232; E. P. Forbis, "Women's Public Image in Italian Honorary Inscriptions," *AJP* 111 (4, 1990): 493–512; P. Thonemann, "The Women of Akmoneia," *JRS* 100 (2010): 163–78.

¹⁶³⁸ S. B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken, 1975), 201; for house churches, see C. Osiek and M. Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 194–220.

¹⁶³⁹ On Greek benefaction, Roman patron-client structures, and reciprocity in relation to this passage, see Keener, *Acts*, 3:2408–13.

Lydia pleads for Paul's group to stay (16:15); hospitality was both a sacred duty and a privilege for the host, especially if the guest is a particularly honorable person.¹⁶⁴⁰ Insisting on a guest staying was good form,¹⁶⁴¹ and refusing an invitation could be deemed rude (Cicero, *Att.* 12.36).¹⁶⁴² Both Lydia and the jailer (Acts 16:34) demonstrate the reality of their faith by hospitality (cf. Luke 10:7–8, 10–11).¹⁶⁴³

A Closer Look: Hospitality

Hospitality was a central virtue in traditional Mediterranean culture.¹⁶⁴⁴ Greeks considered hospitality an expression of fearing the gods (Homer, *Od.* 9.176); Zeus was special protector of strangers¹⁶⁴⁵ and patron deity of hospitality,¹⁶⁴⁶ and inhospitality warranted his anger.¹⁶⁴⁷ Judaism's key example for hospitality was Abraham, with many traditions developing the portrait in Gen 18:2–8.¹⁶⁴⁸

Inns, a key alternative for travelers, were notorious for poor facilities, hygiene, and bedbugs,¹⁶⁴⁹ as well as prostitutes¹⁶⁵⁰ and sometimes lethal danger.¹⁶⁵¹ Most people despised innkeepers.¹⁶⁵²

¹⁶⁴⁰ Ps.-Lucian, *Affairs* 9; *Jos. Asen.* 3:2–3/3:3–4.

¹⁶⁴¹ Homer, *Od.* 3.345–58; Luke 24:29; especially if the alternative was dangerous (Gen 9:2–3; Judg 19:20). In extreme cases, the guest might have to protest to be able to leave (Judg 19:4–9; Tob 10:6–10).

¹⁶⁴² Accepting an invitation could appear like granting an honor (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 6.14.1–2).

¹⁶⁴³ J. Gillman, "Hospitality in Acts 16," *Louvain Studies* 17 (2–3, 1992): 181–96.

¹⁶⁴⁴ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 1.118–20, 123–24; 4.26–36; Cicero, *Part. or.* 23.80; *Off.* 2.18.64; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.28.23; Ps.-Phoc. 24; *m. Abot* 1:5, 15; 3:12; for Essenes, Josephus, *War* 2.124–25. I condense here Keener, *Acts*, 3:2414–20. See further J. Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985); A. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

¹⁶⁴⁵ Homer, *Od.* 9.268–77; Pindar, *Nem.* 5.33; *Ol.* 8.22; Euripides, *Cycl.* 355; Ovid, *Metam.* 10.224.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Homer, *Il.* 13.624–25; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.39; 12.75.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Homer, *Od.* 9.478–79; Musonius Rufus 15, p. 96.28–31.

¹⁶⁴⁸ See Koenig, *Hospitality*, 15–20.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Stambaugh, *City*, 182; B. M. Rapske, "Acts, Travel, and Shipwreck," pages 1–47 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 15; *OCD*³ 759–60.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Virgil, *Copa* 33; *SIG* 1251 = *IG* 14.24; *CIL* 4.1679; *T. Jud.* 12.2; Casson, *Travel*, 206–7; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 5.8, 304 (with Josh 2:1; Judg 16:1); *m. Abod. Zar.* 2:1. Most of these prostitutes were slaves or freedwomen (Stambaugh, *City*, 208), often discarded as infants.

¹⁶⁵¹ Cicero, *Div.* 1.27.57; Valerius Maximus 1.7. ext. 10; Liefeld, "Preacher," 13.

¹⁶⁵² Theophrastus, *Char.* 6.5; Aeschines, *Timarchus* 188; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.133; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.2.103; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.276.

Ideal hospitality treated the guest as if oneself (Pliny, *Ep.* 1.4.2–3; 6.28.3). It included lodging, food, and often being helped on one's way, and three days was a normal stay, with up to a week being acceptable.¹⁶⁵³ Hospitality obligated the families of host and guest to friendship even over the course of generations.¹⁶⁵⁴ Only the most wicked would injure those with whom they had ever shared table.¹⁶⁵⁵

Jewish tradition valued hospitality toward traveling sages.¹⁶⁵⁶ Jesus often depended on hospitality (e.g., Luke 4:38; 5:29; 10:38; 19:5; 22:10–11), and instructed his agents to do so (9:4; 10:7–8). Denied a room in 2:7, Jesus receives one (the same Greek term) in 22:11. He was often invited to dinner or fellowship (7:36; 11:37; 14:1; 24:28–29). ****

16:16–18: EXORCISM OF A POWERFUL SPIRIT

Paul's ministry in Philippi illustrates his gentile mission and that nothing can hinder the gospel (28:31).¹⁶⁵⁷ The passage also illustrates how Jesus's ministry is carried into a new context. Just as Jesus silenced demons' superhuman "testimony" to his identity (Luke 4:34–35), so here does Paul (Acts 16:18; cf. 19:25–26). Just as Jesus faced suffering for challenging established religious and perhaps economic interests, as well as spiritual powers (cf., e.g., Luke 8:32–37), so does Paul. The preaching of the gospel and establishing of new churches is worth enduring suffering (cf. Acts 16:25).

Paul continues to frequent the place of prayer (16:16a); Paul leaves local Jewish gatherings only under duress (Acts 17:3–5, 11–13; 18:4–7; 19:8–9; 2 Cor 11:25). That the slave girl of 16:16 was young reinforces the allusion to the girl mantic at Delphi (see "A Closer Look: Pythoness

¹⁶⁵³ R. F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 29. A year in Cicero, *Fam.* 13.19.1.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Homer, *Il.* 6.212–31; Euripides, *Ch. Her.* 1034–36; Cicero, *Fam.* 13.34.1.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Homer, *Il.* 21.76; *Od.* 4.534–35; 11.414–20; 14.404–5; Euripides, *Cycl.* 126–28; *Hec.* 25–26, 710–20, 850–56; Cicero, *Pis.* 34.83; Livy 25.16.6.

¹⁶⁵⁶ *Sipre Deut.* 1.10.1; Koenig, *Hospitality*, 16–17; S. Safrai, "Education and the Study of the Torah," 945–70 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 966. One should, however, be discerning (Sir 11:29, 34; 2 John 10).

¹⁶⁵⁷ With J. Hintermaier, "Grundlage und Entwicklung der paulinischen Mission am Beispiel von Apg 16,11–40," *SNTSU* 25 (2000): 152–75.

Spirits”). In Luke’s larger narrative, she may contrast with the true prophetic women, daughters, youth, and especially the term translated “female servants” (plural *doulai*) in Acts 2:17–18.¹⁶⁵⁸ A servant girl (the same Greek word, *paidiskê*, which the NRSV translates differently on every occasion) exposed Peter as a follower of Jesus and he denies it (Luke 22:56–57); later, positively and by contrast, another *paidiskê* reveals Peter and is disbelieved (Acts 12:13–15). Unlike Peter, Paul does not deny that he is Jesus’s follower; he acts only as Jesus did in silencing demons (Luke 4:35, 41).¹⁶⁵⁹

Her *owners* (plural *kurioi*; Acts 16:16, 19) contrast with the true *kurios*, Jesus Christ (16:15, 30–32). The plural could signify ownership by a family¹⁶⁶⁰ or any sort of joint ownership (shares in slaves could be divided with estates, for example; cf. Luke 16:13).¹⁶⁶¹ (On slaves, see the closer look section at Acts 12:13.) The cumulative status of several priests or a corporation, all Romans (16:21), would increase their influence in bringing charges (16:19–21).¹⁶⁶² The slave, by contrast, would be culturally and linguistically Greek, as was her form of prophecy.¹⁶⁶³ Given the fees for oracular consultation at stationary shrines,¹⁶⁶⁴ her owners could indeed acquire *a great deal of money*. Luke, however, opposes profiteering from spiritual matters (8:18, 20; 19:18–19, 25–26; cf. 3:6; 20:33–35). He describes her prophetic power with a verb (*fortune-telling*) used in the LXX exclusively for pagan or false prophecy.¹⁶⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵⁸ Just possibly he also contrasts her with Lydia: a prosperous businesswoman versus the slave who brought business to her masters; one whose heart was open for God’s word to enter (16:14) and the other from whom a demon exited (16:18); one who welcomed them into the private space of her home (16:15) and the other who exposed and disturbed them in public (16:17–18).

¹⁶⁵⁹ Of course the Jerusalem apostles, including Peter, later cast out demons (5:16), as did Philip (8:7).

¹⁶⁶⁰ Roman law (16:21) distinguished the property of husbands and wives (Plutarch, *R.Q.* 7, *Mor.* 265E; Gardner, *Women*, 74).

¹⁶⁶¹ Lysias, *Or.* 4.1–13, §§100–1; *P. Grenf.* 1.21; *m. ‘Ed.* 1:13; *Git.* 4:5; *Pesah.* 8:1; *t. Ker.* 1:17.

¹⁶⁶² Rapske, *Custody*, 119.

¹⁶⁶³ C. Salles, “Pythies et sibylles contre augures et haruspices: La divination en Grèce et à Rome,” *FoiVie* 98 (4, 1999): 63–74.

¹⁶⁶⁴ See Aune, *Prophecy*, 30.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Deut 18:10; 1 Sam 28:8; 2 Kgs 17:17; Mic 3:11; Jer 34:9 [MT 27:9]; Ezek 12:24; 13:6, 23; 21:26, 28, 34; 22:28. Cf. also Josephus, *Ant.* 6.330; A. D. Nock, “The Vocabulary of the New Testament,” *JBL* 52 (2–3, 1933): 131–39 (134).

A Closer Look: Pythoness Spirits¹⁶⁶⁶

Contrary to the suggestions of some, Luke does not connect demonization with gender; he narrates more exorcisms of males (Luke 4:35; 8:29–33; 9:42; 11:14) than of females (13:11–16; cf. 8:2).¹⁶⁶⁷ But the particular spirit in 16:16 is connected with the victim's gender. Although some later sources do use Luke's expression *pneuma puthôna* for a spirit of divination more broadly,¹⁶⁶⁸ for most of Luke's audience it would evoke the Pythia, the oracular priestess of Apollo at Delphi.¹⁶⁶⁹ Only a virgin from Delphi qualified for the role.¹⁶⁷⁰ Her pronouncements were widely regarded as accurate;¹⁶⁷¹ nations solicited and obeyed them.¹⁶⁷² She offered utterances at least monthly, though most inquirers on most days depended on the casting of lots.¹⁶⁷³

In most sources, the Pythia would prophesy from a subterranean tripod seat.¹⁶⁷⁴ Although some less dramatic accounts of her inspiration remain,¹⁶⁷⁵ her possession is often depicted as mad ecstasy.¹⁶⁷⁶ After the ecstasy, she supposedly could not remember her experience.¹⁶⁷⁷ Some claimed that the power of earth inspired her as nature inspired the Sibyl.¹⁶⁷⁸ One stylized literary portrait sounds like a violent rape of

¹⁶⁶⁶ Condensed from Keener, *Acts*, 3:2422–29.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Against supposing Paul's prejudice against the slave's gender here, see more fully Keener, *Acts*, 3:2458–61. Luke does not always label spirits the same way; e.g., whereas they are "unclean" in Luke 4:33, 36; 6:18; 8:29; 9:42; 11:24; Acts 5:16; and 8:7, the label does not appear in Luke 4:41; 7:21; 9:1; 13:21; Acts 19:12–13.

¹⁶⁶⁸ L. A. Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religion in Acts* (LNTS 277; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 29–30.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Cf. Isocrates, *Paneg.* 21, *Or.* 4; Apollodorus, *Bib.* 2.4.12; Plutarch, *Solon* 4.2; *Thes.* 36.1; *G. Q.* 12, *Mor.* 293E; 19, *Mor.* 295DE; *Borr.* 3, *Mor.* 828D.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Lucian, *Astr.* 23; Klauck, *Context*, 186.

¹⁶⁷¹ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 8.79–80; Herodotus 1.65–67; Cicero, *Div.* 1.37.81; Strabo 9.3.2, 11–12. But for alleged deceptions, see Plutarch, *Mal. Herodotus.* 23, *Mor.* 860CD; Diogenes Laertius 5.91.

¹⁶⁷² E.g., Aeschines, *Ctes.* 108–9; Livy 5.14.3; 5.15.12; 5.16.8; 23.11.1; Valerius Maximus 8.15.3; Plutarch, *Thes.* 36.1.

¹⁶⁷³ Aune, *Prophecy*, 30.

¹⁶⁷⁴ E.g., Callimachus, *Hymn* 4 (to Delos), 89–90; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 72.12; Lucian, *Z. Rants* 30.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Or. Delphi* 7, *Mor.* 397C.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Valerius Maximus 1.8.10; Lucan, *C. W.* 5.97–101; Longinus, *Sublime* 13.2; Plutarch, *Dial. On Love* 16, *Mor.* 759B; *Sib. Or.* 11.315, 318.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Aelius Aristides, *Defense of Oratory* 34–35, §11D. Mantic possession was periodic rather than continuous (e.g., Arrian, *Alex.* 4.13.5–6).

¹⁶⁷⁸ Justin, *Epit.* 24.6.9; Cicero, *Div.* 1.36.79. Some believed that these subterranean exhalations no longer worked (Cicero, *Div.* 2.57.117), but in the first century CE Pliny compares them with other unusual vapors from the earth (Pliny, *Nat.* 2.95.207–8). Many

her identity: Apollo “forced his way into her body”; her head tosses, her hair bristles, things are overturned; Apollo tortures her from within, yielding frenzy and foaming lips, inarticulate groaning, wailing, and finally articulate speech (Lucan, *C.W.* 5.165–93).¹⁶⁷⁹ Though articulate, her utterances were obscure;¹⁶⁸⁰ the temple’s professional staff crafted interpretations meriting their fee.¹⁶⁸¹ Subsequent tradition emphasized the Pythia’s endorsement of Socrates’s wisdom;¹⁶⁸² even if Paul resembles Socrates in Acts 17:19, he rejects such endorsements (16:18; cf. Luke 4:34–35).

Apollo was associated with a variety of mantic sanctuaries.¹⁶⁸³ Apollo’s frenzy also might completely overpower other women, such as the Sibyl (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.77–102) or Cassandra (Seneca, *Troj.* 34). The Pythia was, however, specifically Delphic, so Luke’s language may suggest simply a powerful mantic spirit resembling the Delphic one. Jews and Christians despised the Delphic system.¹⁶⁸⁴ Pagans would not understand why Paul would exorcise a spirit endorsing him with a recognition oracle, but monotheists would read this as a power encounter with a false god, a demon.¹⁶⁸⁵ Many Jews¹⁶⁸⁶ and Christians¹⁶⁸⁷ considered the gods of the pagans demons.

question the claims of such “mephitic vapours” (M. Cary and T. J. Haarhoff, *Life and Thought in the Greek and Roman World* [4th ed.; London: Methuen, 1946], 317).

¹⁶⁷⁹ Supernaturally, her voice fills the cavern, her hair bristles, and the wreath rises from her head (Lucan, *C.W.* 5.148–57). Unlike Plutarch, Lucan probably never witnessed the experience, but cf. Plutarch, *Or. Delphi* 21, *Mor.* 404E. Many held that *daimones* spoke through their vessels, like a piper through a pipe (Maximus of Tyre 9.1). Her experience appears unpleasant and involuntary in Valerius Maximus 1.8.10; Apollo’s power “impregnated” her in Longinus, *Sublime* 13.2.

¹⁶⁸⁰ See esp. Herodotus 1.86; Lucian, *Z. Rants* 43; *Alex.* 48.

¹⁶⁸¹ Klauck, *Context*, 189–90.

¹⁶⁸² E.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 7.31.119–7.34.120; Pausanias 1.22.8.

¹⁶⁸³ See, e.g., Aristophanes, *Birds*, 716; Strabo 17.1.43; Iamblichus, *Myst.* 3.11. Not all used female priestesses (e.g., Claros in Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.54, though note the female medium there in Aune, *Prophecy*, 28).

¹⁶⁸⁴ *Sib. Or.* 4.4–6; *Sipra Qedoshim* pq. 9.207.3.3; Justin, *1 Apol.* 18; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 26.6; Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation* 2; Tertullian, *On Prayer* 17.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 35; cf. Bede, *Comm. Acts* 16.16.

¹⁶⁸⁶ E.g., Ps 106:37 (esp. LXX); Bar 4:7; *1 En.* 19:1; *Jub.* 1:11; 22:17; 4Q244 f12.2; 4Q385a f3a–c.7; *Sib. Or.* 8.43–47; *Sipre Deut.* 318.2.1–2.

¹⁶⁸⁷ E.g., *1 Cor* 10:20 (cf. *Deut* 32:17); *Rev* 9:20; Justin, *1 Apol.* 5; Athenagoras 26; Tertullian, *Apol.* 23.5–6.

A Closer Look: Spirit-Possession Reports¹⁶⁸⁸

In the mid-second century, Lucian satirizes an exorcism in Palestine: the victims “fall down and roll their eyes and fill their mouths with foam”; the exorcist then heals them and takes their money.¹⁶⁸⁹ Later still, Origen’s Celsus attacks Jesus as nothing more than a cheap magician-exorcist of the Egyptian sort in the market.¹⁶⁹⁰ In the third century, an exorcism in Philostratus’s *Life of Apollonius* probably draws on Christian as well as other models (*Vit. Apoll.* 4.20; contrast 3.38; 4.10, 25).¹⁶⁹¹

In the first century, exorcism is better known in Jewish circles (Matt 12:27//Luke 11:19),¹⁶⁹² though nowhere close to as pervasively as in the Gospels and Acts,¹⁶⁹³ where it appears as a sign of the kingdom (Matt 12:28//Luke 11:20). Jewish folk tradition expelled demons with foul odors (Tob 6:17; 8:3) or incantations (Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45–47).¹⁶⁹⁴ They also healed demonic affliction with roots or herbs (*Jub.* 10:11–13; Josephus, *War* 7.185), sometimes inserted into the nose (*Ant.* 8.47). The departing spirit might overturn a container of water to confirm its

¹⁶⁸⁸ I address this topic at much greater length in Keener, *Acts*, 3:2429–56; idem, *Miracles*, 2:769–856; C. S. Keener, “Spirit Possession as a Cross-Cultural Experience,” *BBR* 20 (2010): 215–36; idem, “Crooked Spirits and Spiritual Identity Theft: A Keener Response to Crooks?” *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 39 (4, 2018): 345–72.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 16 (LCL 3:345).

¹⁶⁹⁰ Origen, *Cels.* 1.68 (noted in Eve, *Miracles*, 347).

¹⁶⁹¹ B. L. Blackburn, “Miracle Working ΘΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ in Hellenism (and Hellenistic Judaism),” pages 185–218 in *The Miracles of Jesus* (ed. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 192. The commonalities are often observed (e.g., T. Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* [SNTSMS 129; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 121–25; Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 103, citing Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 2.14; 3.38; 4.10, 25, 40).

¹⁶⁹² On the Middle Eastern origin of exorcism stories, see further B. E. Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 23–25; S. V. McCasland, *By the Finger of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 65–82. For a fuller survey of early Jewish demonology, see E. Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984), 69–104; more briefly, Keener, *Miracles*, 2:769–87; E. Eshel, “Jesus the Exorcist in Light of Epigraphic Sources,” pages 178–85 in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

¹⁶⁹³ Eve, *Miracles*, 244. Most scholars today recognize that Jesus was known as an exorcist; see, e.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:646–77; G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993); T. Costa, “The Exorcisms and Healings of Jesus within Classical Culture,” pages 113–44 in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture* (ed. S. Porter and A. W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹⁶⁹⁴ Apparently also 4Q560 fl.2.5–6; cf. Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 30–31.

departure (8.48).¹⁶⁹⁵ Some apparently sought to exorcise evil spirits by laying on hands (1Q20 20.28–29).¹⁶⁹⁶ Early Christians practiced exorcism often.¹⁶⁹⁷ Justin emphasizes that Christians cast out demons using Jesus's name, rather than odors and incantations like others (*Dial.* 85); Tertullian claimed that any true Christian could quickly expel a demon with a command (*Apol.* 23.4–6).

Although modern Western readers are often skeptical about accounts indigenously interpreted as spirit possession and exorcism, the experiences to which they refer are widely documented globally. Studies have shown “an altered neurophysiology” during many possession states,¹⁶⁹⁸ although they also manifest in a range of cultural forms.¹⁶⁹⁹

Anthropologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and indigenous informants interpret these experiences differently.¹⁷⁰⁰ Yet anthropologists today often try to study them from the emic perspective of societies that claim them, rather than imposing a Western interpretive grid.¹⁷⁰¹ Far from being only an ancient Jewish belief, spirit-possession beliefs appear in more than 70 percent of societies globally.¹⁷⁰² One could thus provide examples from a wide variety of societies in most

¹⁶⁹⁵ Later, cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20. Music might also offer temporary relief (*LAB* 60:1–3; one understanding of 11Q5 27.10). For invoking other spirits to expel them, cf. Aramaic Incantation Text 3.8–9; 50.7–8; *T. Sol.* 2:4; 5:5; 8:5–11; 18; *PGM* 101.38–39.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Qumran scrolls also speak of an exorcist-healer (4Q242 f1–3.4) and possibly of healing from demons (11Q11 2.3–7).

¹⁶⁹⁷ See further MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 27–28, 40–41, 60–61.

¹⁶⁹⁸ R. Prince, “Can the EEG Be Used in the Study of Possession States?” pages 121–37 in *Trance and Possession States* (ed. R. Prince; Montreal: R. M. Bucke Memorial Society, 1968), 127–29; see further F. D. Goodman, *How about Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 1–24, 126.

¹⁶⁹⁹ E. Bourguignon, “An Assessment of Some Comparisons and Implications,” pages 321–39 in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (ed. E. Bourguignon; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 337.

¹⁷⁰⁰ See, e.g., T. Wendl, “Slavery, Spirit Possession and Ritual Consciousness: The Tchamba Cult among the Mina of Togo,” pages 111–23 in *Spirit Possession, Modernity and Power in Africa* (ed. H. Behrend and U. Luigi; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 120.

¹⁷⁰¹ Crapanzano, “Introduction,” pages 1–40 in Crapanzano and Garrison, *Case Studies*, 7; E. Bourguignon, *Possession* (San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp, 1976), 14; Keller, *Hammer*, 39–40; Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 408, 410–14, 427.

¹⁷⁰² Bourguignon, “Spirit Possession Belief,” 21; cf. E. Turner, “The Reality of Spirits,” *ReVision* 15 (1, 1992): 28–32 (30); I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 100–26.

regions of the world,¹⁷⁰³ among them Africa,¹⁷⁰⁴ Asia,¹⁷⁰⁵ and the Americas.¹⁷⁰⁶

In a wide range of societies, possession results in extraordinary and sudden shifts in voice and behavior.¹⁷⁰⁷ Those leaving the possession state often have no recollection of how they acted while “possessed.”¹⁷⁰⁸ Relevant to Acts 19:16 (and Luke 9:39), possession is sometimes expressed violently,¹⁷⁰⁹

¹⁷⁰³ See, e.g., Crapanzano and Garrison, *Case Studies*; sources in Boddy, “Spirit Possession,” 428–34; G. P. Makris and R. Natvig, “The Zar, Tumbura, and Bori Cults: A Select Annotated Bibliography,” pages 233–82 in *Women’s Medicine: The Zar-Bori Cult in Africa and Beyond* (ed. I. M. Lewis, A. Al-Safi, and S. Hurreiz; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991); Lewis, Al-Safi, and Hurreiz, *Medicine*, 283–91.

¹⁷⁰⁴ E.g., J. Beattie and J. Middleton, *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (New York: Africana, 1969); J. Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); P. Stoller, “Stressing Social Change and Songhay Possession,” pages 267–84 in Ward, *Altered States and Mental Health*; M. Lambek, *Knowledge and Practice in Mayotte: Local Discourses of Islam, Sorcery, and Spirit Possession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); L. A. Sharp, *The Possessed and the Dispossessed: Spirits, Identity, and Power in a Madagascar Migrant Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Behrend and Luig, eds., *Spirit Possession, Modernity and Power in Africa*; J. H. Smith, “Of Spirit Possession and Structural Adjustment Programs: Government Downsizing, Education and Their Enchantments in Neo-liberal Kenya,” *JRelAf* 31 (4, 2001): 427–56; L. Giles, “The Role of Spirits in Swahili Coastal Society,” pages 61–85 in *Studies in Witchcraft, Magic, War, and Peace in Africa* (ed. B. Nicolini; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2006).

¹⁷⁰⁵ E.g., J. N. Gray, “Bayu Utarnu: Ghost Exorcism and Sacrifice in Nepal,” *Ethnology* 26 (1987): 179–99; C. R. Chandrashekar, “Possession Syndrome in India,” pages 79–95 in Ward, *Altered States and Mental Health*; B. Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Berg, 1991); B. McVeigh, “Spirit Possession in Sukyo, Mahikari: A Variety of Sociopsychological Experience,” *Japanese Religions* 21 (2, 1996): 283–98; R. Basso, “Music, Possession, and Shamanism among Khond Tribes,” *Culture and Religion* 7 (2, 2006): 177–97.

¹⁷⁰⁶ J. D. Dobbin, *The Jombee Dance of Montserrat: A Study of Trance Ritual in the West Indies* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986); most articles in Crapanzano and Garrison, *Case Studies*.

¹⁷⁰⁷ See R. Firth, “Foreword,” pages ix–xiv in Beattie and Middleton, *Spirit Mediumship*, x; Mbiti, *Religions*, 106, 225–26; M. Gelfand, *Shona Religion: With Special Reference to the Makorekore* (Cape Town: Juta, 1962), 169; A. Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 177; J. McClenon, *Wondrous Events: Foundations of Religious Belief* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 134–35, 226; S. M. Greenfield, *Spirits with Scalpels* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008), 40, 83.

¹⁷⁰⁸ E.g., Gelfand, *Religion*, 166, 169; M. J. Field, “Spirit Possession in Ghana,” pages 3–13 in Beattie and Middleton, *Spirit Mediumship*, 3, 6; R. Horton, “Types of Spirit Possession in Kalabari Religion,” pages 14–49 in *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷⁰⁹ M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 71; M. Gelfand, “Psychiatric Disorders as Recognized by the Shona,” pages 156–73 in *Kiev, Magic, Faith, and Healing*, 165, 170; K. E. Schmidt, “Folk Psychiatry in Sarawak: A Tentative System of Psychiatry of the Iban,” pages 139–55 in *ibid.*, 145; B. Kaplan and D. Johnson, “The Social Meaning of Navajo Psychopathology

even toward oneself,¹⁷¹⁰ and sometimes with extraordinary strength¹⁷¹¹ or pain immunity.¹⁷¹² More relevant to Acts 16:16, mediums sometimes claim to speak prophetically for spirits.^{1713 ****}

A spirit-moved slave girl announces the Spirit-filled Paul and Silas as slaves of God (16:17). Although this title was sometimes used for servants of the Delphic Apollo, such as herself,¹⁷¹⁴ it was also an honorable title for true prophets of God (2:18; 4:29; Jer 7:25). *Way of salvation* is also true (Luke 1:76–77; 3:4–6), although in its anarthrous form here (*a way of salvation*) it ambiguously allows a polytheistic interpretation.¹⁷¹⁵ Polytheists often sought gods for *salvation* (*sôtêria*), which included health and safety. Likewise, *Most High* is a common title for the true God (e.g., Luke 1:32, 35, 76; Acts 7:48),¹⁷¹⁶ although polytheists could use it for the Jewish God as simply the highest in a pantheon,¹⁷¹⁷ or without any clear reference to the Jewish God at all.¹⁷¹⁸

Although the spirit speaks truth in 16:17 (as in Luke 4:33–34, 41; 8:28), its testimony is unwelcome, inviting exorcism (as in Luke 4:35, 41; 8:32–33). The spirit recognizes their authority (cf. 19:15; Mark 1:24; 5:7; 9:20), but ultimately relativizes their message by making it acceptable within a polytheistic framework.¹⁷¹⁹ It reveals what is not its place to reveal, and

and Psychotherapy,” pages 203–29 in *ibid.*, 227; G. Obeyesekere, “Psychocultural Exegesis of a Case of Spirit Possession in Sri Lanka,” pages 235–94 in Crapanzano and Garrison, *Case Studies*, 251.

¹⁷¹⁰ E.g., R. B. Lee, “The Sociology of !Kung Bushman Trance Performances,” pages 35–54 in Prince, *Trance and Possession States*, 41–42, 47; J. R. Fox, “Witchcraft and Clanship in Cochiti Therapy,” pages 174–200 in *Magic, Faith, and Healing*, 185; Mbiti, *Religions*, 106, 225–26; C. Jochim, *Chinese Religions: A Cultural Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 154.

¹⁷¹¹ Cf. Luke 8:29; Acts 19:16; T. Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 125.

¹⁷¹² Jochim, *Chinese Religions*, 154.

¹⁷¹³ E.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 233, 249–50; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 96, 303; Field, “Possession,” 6, 9; J. Middleton, “Spirit Possession among the Lugbara,” pages 220–32 in Beattie and Middleton, *Spirit Mediumship*, 224; A. Southall, “Spirit Possession and Mediumship among the Alur,” pages 232–72 in *ibid.*, 242–43.

¹⁷¹⁴ Reimer, *Women*, 160.

¹⁷¹⁵ Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 224–25, 263.

¹⁷¹⁶ E.g., 1QS 10.12; 11.15; 1 En. 9:3; 10:1; 94:8; 97:2; 98:7; *Jub.* 12:19; 13:16, 29; Sir 4:10; 7:9, 15; see Reimer, *Women*, 161–67; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 95–97.

¹⁷¹⁷ E.g., Gen 14:19–22; Num 24:16; Isa 14:14; Dan 3:26; Philo, *Embassy* 157; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.163.

¹⁷¹⁸ E.g., Pausanias 1.26.5; 2.2.8; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.30; cf. A. T. Kraabel, “Hypsistos and the Synagogue at Sardis,” *GRBS* 10 (1, 1969): 81–93.

¹⁷¹⁹ Cf. P. R. Trebilco, “Paul and Silas – ‘Servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16.16–18),” *JSTNT* 36 (1989): 51–73.

welcoming its testimony would compromise dependence on Christ and his way.¹⁷²⁰ Believers that Paul instructed in what he knew of gospel tradition might wonder why, since spirits were harmful and exorcism helpful (e.g., 10:38; Luke 4:34–35; 13:11–16), Paul tolerated a pagan endorsement even temporarily.¹⁷²¹ Perhaps the spirit seeks to provoke a confrontation that gentiles would view as unprovoked; confrontation or exorcism could lead to trouble (as in Acts 16:19–21).

Exorcism in Jesus's name (16:18) clarifies the otherwise ambiguous *way of salvation*: Jesus's name is the only name by which people may be saved (2:21; 4:12).¹⁷²² This exorcism also *demonstrates* that salvation from evil.

16:19–24: BEATEN AND IMPRISONED

Just as Peter and John were arraigned for performing a benefaction (4:9), here Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned for liberating a slave girl from the pythoness spirit, hence demonstrating “the way of deliverance” (16:17). Just as Jesus faced opposition for challenging established religious and perhaps economic interests, as well as spiritual powers (cf., e.g., Luke 8:32–37), so does Paul (cf. also Acts 19:24–27). The anti-Judaism employed against the missionaries (16:20–21) reinforces the irony in Luke's overall narrative: the apostles are rejected by pagans for proclaiming true Jewish monotheism, just as they are by some Jews as if they are apostates (cf. 14:14–19; 19:26, 33–34)!

Paul may have delayed expelling the spirit because it would entail danger: most gentiles would view the spirit as benevolent, certainly toward Paul and Silas (16:17). People considered ingratitude toward benefactors appalling, so Paul and Silas could expect little sympathy. Yet the slave girl is now spiritually free – and Paul and Silas consequently will be imprisoned (Acts 16:23–24).

In 16:19, the owners see that their *hope of making money* (this translates a term used also in 16:16 and for the religious profits in 19:24–25) is *gone*. *Gone* translates the same term as *came out* in 16:18: their profits were

¹⁷²⁰ God's way continues to remain somewhat discreet even after the fullest messianic secret (Luke 9:21) is revealed (Acts 10:41). God himself might choose to work through demonic testimony (as in 19:15–17), but he would reject wrong motives (8:20–23).

¹⁷²¹ H.-J. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 69.

¹⁷²² Acts 19:13–16 will clarify another potential ambiguity: true exorcism in Jesus's name was only for those truly following Jesus. For acting in Jesus's name, see comment on 3:6.

expelled with the demon. A person's deliverance from demonic bondage takes precedence over others' economic interests (Luke 8:32–37). Luke's audience should be "far enough into Luke-Acts" to recognize the exorcism as a benefaction.¹⁷²³ Although Luke's tightly focused narrative barely ever recounts the subsequent experience of those freed from demons (except in Luke 8:2), and the slave (like Philippi's jailer) remains unnamed, it seems likely that she afterward trusted the message Paul proclaimed, and at least possible that the Christian community bought her freedom, as synagogues sometimes purchased freedom for fellow Jews who were in slavery.¹⁷²⁴

The slaveholders *dragged* Paul and Silas *into the marketplace* (*agora*, 16:19) – here undoubtedly the forum. Although both were called *agoras*, the commercial marketplace lay to the southeast of the forum. Legal business was conducted in the forum, modeled after Rome's, in the city center through which the Via Egnatia ran. At 230 by 485 feet, Philippi's forum, surrounded on three sides by porticoes, could host large crowds.

Although the accusers' motives are pecuniary (cf. analogously 19:25–26), they choose charges guaranteed to arouse patriotic pathos, by claiming that the missionaries oppose local customs (cf. analogously 19:27–28). Unaware that Paul and Silas are Romans as well as Jews (16:37), the accusers paint them as anti-Roman Jews.

The *authorities* (16:19) here are likely *the magistrates* (16:20); in a colony, these would be the two *duoviri*.¹⁷²⁵ Part of their task was to maintain public order,¹⁷²⁶ a role in which they fail in 16:22. For the first time in Acts, we hear official civic charges against Paul (16:20–21), suggesting that they are significant enough (as in 17:5–7; 18:12–13; 19:25–27) to warrant Luke's apologetic (see comment on 24:5). Ironically, Paul's Jewish accusers in 17:5–7 and 18:13 charge him with subverting public order (cf. 24:5), whereas the pagan accusers in 16:20–21 and 19:25–27, concerned about religious profits, charge him for being Jewish or monotheistic!

In Roman courts, the accuser's status was normally higher than the defendant's; here Roman citizens, presumably descended from the original

¹⁷²³ Arlandson, *Women*, 198–99.

¹⁷²⁴ Reimer, *Women*, 180–84. Given the slaveholders' interest in profit (16:19), they might well sell her, and, given her loss of mantic ability, for a significantly reduced price. Ironically, nonmantic "possession" often reduced rather than augmented slaves' monetary value (cf. V. Nutton, "Epilepsy," BNP 4:1109).

¹⁷²⁵ For the various public offices in Philippi, see D. W. J. Gill, "Macedonia," pages 397–417 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 412.

¹⁷²⁶ H. W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul* (WUNT 2; Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 10–11.

veteran colonists, believe that they accuse lowly non-Romans.¹⁷²⁷ They might prefer a civil suit for property damage against the missionaries.¹⁷²⁸ Since they would be unlikely to win that,¹⁷²⁹ however, they act as demagogues, promoting a criminal charge.

They act by inciting xenophobic unrest – meanwhile audaciously accusing the defendants of inciting unrest!¹⁷³⁰ Ironically, a cognate to their term translated *disturbing* (16:20) describes the behavior of Paul’s Jewish adversaries (17:8, 13) and others who disturbed gentiles (15:24). Their second charge is that the missionaries preach customs unlawful for Romans (16:21)¹⁷³¹ – Jewish customs that, ironically, Jewish nationalists later accuse Paul of undermining (21:21)! Further ironically, the antagonists charge the apostles with unlawful behavior (16:21), when in fact it is the abuse of Paul and Silas as Roman citizens that is unlawful (22:25).¹⁷³²

The biggest irony was the accusers’ unwise, prejudicial assumption that Jewish foreigners were not Roman citizens. As foreigners of presumed low status, Paul and Silas could well have been presumed guilty without dignifying the case (and insulting the local accusers) by a more lengthy hearing.¹⁷³³

A Closer Look: Anti-Judaism

Some Jews felt that “all” people found their customs offensive (*Sib. Or.* 3.271–72). Anti-Judaism¹⁷³⁴ existed widely in the Greek world, particularly in Alexandria,¹⁷³⁵ but Roman anti-Judaism is more relevant to Philippi.

¹⁷²⁷ Rapske, *Custody*, 56–62, 119.

¹⁷²⁸ What they saw as the real issue (Reimer, *Women*, 176–78).

¹⁷²⁹ Since the “damage” was not inflicted physically, the missionaries could be charged with harming her only by sorcery – except that the slave girl had repeatedly identified them as God’s servants (ruling out sorcery), and if she was mistaken, then they had done no damage.

¹⁷³⁰ Disturbing the peace was prisonable (Rapske, *Custody*, 117).

¹⁷³¹ Keep in mind Philippi’s pride in its Romanitas (noted at 16:12; cf. Barreto, *Negotiations*, 151–52, 161–62); even most civic religion in Philippi was Roman (Klauck, *Magic*, 64).

¹⁷³² This reflects a larger cultural irony: gentiles often denounced Jews as lawless (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.100–1), though Judaism was above all a religion of law (J. L. Daniel, “Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period,” *JBL* 98 [1, 1979]: 45–65 [53]).

¹⁷³³ Rapske, *Custody*, 125, 129.

¹⁷³⁴ Ancient anti-Judaism involved customs, not technically the anti-Semitism of nineteenth-century racial theories; see S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (LEC 7; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1987), 47–49; Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*, 36–56.

¹⁷³⁵ See *CPJ* 1:24–25; *BGU* 1079.23–26; *P. Lond.* 1912.82–100; Philo, *Flacc.* 1, 78–85; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* Bk. 2.

Claudius's expulsion of many Jews from Rome (18:2; c. 49 CE) set an anti-Jewish tone that colonies could use to excuse their own anti-Jewish actions (cf. also 18:14–17). Debates about Jews being citizens could prove deadly: Jewish protests for citizenship in Greek Alexandria eventually led to pogroms.

Romans traditionally considered Jews particularly superstitious.¹⁷³⁶ They often mocked the Sabbath, circumcision, and abstention from pork.¹⁷³⁷ More threateningly, Tacitus denounces unassimilated Judaism as purely evil (*Hist.* 5.1–5, esp. 5). Jews “regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor” (*Hist.* 5.4; LCL 2:179). They are separatists;¹⁷³⁸ while kind to fellow-Jews, “they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies. They sit apart at meals . . .”¹⁷³⁹ For polytheists who sought to respect others' deities, the belief of this one subjugated people that their own god was supremely powerful and indeed the only true God appeared obstinate.¹⁷⁴⁰ How much more when these monotheists cast out a benevolent spirit in Philippi (Acts 16:18)!

The most consistent criticisms against Jews in this period, however, seem to have stemmed from their success at proselytism.¹⁷⁴¹ When Jews achieved popularity at the expense of their conquerors,¹⁷⁴² particularly winning Roman matrons from ancestral customs, their despised customs became an actual threat.

In an early period, Romans rejected the worship of non-Roman deities in Rome.¹⁷⁴³ Although Rome became more tolerant, Jews had a Diaspora in the empire's capital, proselytized, and (from an elite Roman perspective)

¹⁷³⁶ Horace, *Sat.* 1.5.100–1; Plutarch, *Superst.* 8, *Mor.* 169C; Persius, *Sat.* 5.179–84. Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.21 views the “Jewish superstition” as harmful to other peoples.

¹⁷³⁷ See especially Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96–106; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.137–38.

¹⁷³⁸ Sevenster, *Anti-Semitism*, 89–145, esp. 143–44; E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (SJLA 20; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 123; Daniel, “Anti-Semitism,” 58–62; cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.121, 148; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.102–3; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.33.

¹⁷³⁹ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5 (trans. Church and Brodribb, 659). The Judean revolt provokes Tacitus's extensive diatribe; cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.27, 33.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Cf. Cicero, *Flacc.* 28.69: Jews have continued to violently resist Roman rule and despise its customs despite being conquered.

¹⁷⁴¹ Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.141–44; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5; Dio Cassius 57.18.5a; Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 32–33, 85–91; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 55–56; Tajra, *Trial*, 21–24; Z. Yavetz, “Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity: A Different Approach,” *JJS* 44 (1, 1993): 1–22.

¹⁷⁴² Thus, their popularity among many gentiles (on which, see Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 67–88; Cohen, *Maccabees*, 49–58; Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 250–56) stirred resentment among others (see Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 59–61).

¹⁷⁴³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.35.2; Cicero, *Leg.* 2.8.19; 2.37; Livy 4.30.9–11; 39.8–19.

threatened Roman values.¹⁷⁴⁴ Roman virtue demanded preservation of laws, customs, and gods.¹⁷⁴⁵ ****

Whereas Paul tore his own clothes over pagan worship (14:14), in 16:22 gentiles tear his clothes because he expelled a pagan spirit. Ripping off clothes was standard practice before a beating (e.g., Aulus Gellius 10.3.3; see comment on 7:58; cf. Jesus in Luke 23:34). Jails were known for their filth, and if the missionaries' clothes were returned to them when they were cast in jail, they would be too torn to afford much protection for their wounds.¹⁷⁴⁶

The magistrates' order (16:22) was executed by lictors (the *police* in 16:35, 38); six lictors, citizens themselves, walked in front of *duoviri* in Rome and Roman colonies, carrying *fascēs*, or rods, in bundles.¹⁷⁴⁷ They carried these rods before the magistrate wherever he went, even in his home or to the baths, and they could employ them for corporal punishment.

Romans scourged for various reasons, most commonly as corporal discipline (*P. Flor.* 61; Josephus, *War* 2.269), which also functioned as a warning (Valerius Maximus 1.1.6; *Dig.* 47.21.2).¹⁷⁴⁸ Although free persons were usually beaten with rods rather than deadly leather whips,¹⁷⁴⁹ Paul and Silas received many blows, since their wounds needed cleansing (16:33). Viewing Paul as a sage, Luke's audience might respect his suffering for his beliefs; Stoics were willing to endure unjust beatings and insults.¹⁷⁵⁰

Why did the missionaries not protest that they were Roman citizens, exempt from such beatings? Law courts were loud and often disorderly (e.g., Marc. Aur. 7.48; Cicero, *Att.* 1.16), and mobs still louder; but a citizen could keep crying out (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.62, 142, 163). Perhaps their Judean experience may have made such protests seem useless; in the provinces, corrupt governors might punish such critics even more harshly (*Verr.* 2.5.62.162).¹⁷⁵¹ Protesting during mob passions might accomplish

¹⁷⁴⁴ Z. Yavetz, "Latin Authors on Jews and Dacians," *Historia* 47 (1, 1998): 77–107. On proselytization, cf. Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, 58.

¹⁷⁴⁵ *Rhet. Her.* 3.3.4; Cicero, *Leg.* 2.10.25.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Rapske, *Custody*, 218–19; on prisons' unsanitary conditions, see 216–17.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Plutarch, *R.Q.* 81–82, *Mor.* 283BE; Tajra, *Trial*, 11–12. Whereas high officials had twelve lictors, the magistrates here would have six.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Thus they could be used to enforce discipline (Valerius Maximus 2.7.8). Scourging also typically preceded executions (e.g., Justin, *Epit.* 21.4.7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.43.2; 9.40.3–4; 20.16.2; 20.17.2).

¹⁷⁴⁹ Philo, *Flacc.* 78–80; but cf. also provincials in *Dig.* 48.19.10; 68.28.2; Blinzler, *Trial*, 222.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Musonius Rufus 10, pp. 76.18–78.7; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.18.21–22; 3.4.12; 3.12.10.

¹⁷⁵¹ When mistreated, the poor had little recourse and rarely even sought redress (Toner, *Culture*, 162).

little, or might lead to protracted proceedings;¹⁷⁵² protesting afterward might reveal instead the magistrates as violators of citizen rights¹⁷⁵³ (again, *if* Paul and Silas even expected those rights to be observed; Paul faced this hardship more than once, 2 Cor 11:25).¹⁷⁵⁴

Citizenship was difficult to prove quickly. Tarsus should have public records, but Tarsus was some 700 miles away. Perhaps back at Lydia's home Paul had a *testatio*, "a certified private copy" "inscribed on the waxed surfaces of a small wooden diptych."¹⁷⁵⁵ Still, we do not know if he replaced it after shipwrecks (2 Cor 11:25), and magistrates were free to reject such evidence and wait for witnesses to travel instead. The accused might also wait in jail until the governor visited Philippi.¹⁷⁵⁶

Historically, Paul himself confirms not only that he was imprisoned in various locations but also that he had three rod-beatings (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23–25); the latter would happen only in Roman colonies, of which he has visited only five.¹⁷⁵⁷ Paul also attests that he and at least one companion suffered and were publicly "shamed" in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2; cf. Phil 1:29–30).¹⁷⁵⁸

The pair was probably imprisoned near the forum.¹⁷⁵⁹ Against some commentators, the jailer was not a veteran, unless we suppose him well over a hundred years old.¹⁷⁶⁰ Many civilian prison workers were state-owned slaves, and Philippi owned many public slaves;¹⁷⁶¹ but this likelier

¹⁷⁵² Proving citizenship could also require a protracted process (see comment at 16:37).

¹⁷⁵³ A Roman citizen beaten with rods without trial held the moral and legal high ground against those who ordered him beaten (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 9.39.1–2, 5).

¹⁷⁵⁴ Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 7, suggests that preaching foreign customs might be viewed more harshly for a Roman than for a "mere" Jew.

¹⁷⁵⁵ Rapske, *Custody*, 131.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Rapske, *Custody*, 130–33. For a governor disbelieving a claim, see Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.64.165.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Corinth, which he visits afterward, may be fairly safely omitted. Philippians might also echo elements of Acts 16; see J. H. Hellerman, "Vindicating God's Servants in Philippi and in Philippians: The Influence of Paul's Ministry in Philippi upon the Composition of Philippians 2:6–11," *BBR* 20 (1, 2010): 85–102.

¹⁷⁵⁸ Public punishments deliberately shamed people (Homer, *Il.* 2.265–70; Quintus Curtius 8.6.7; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 76.4; Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.3).

¹⁷⁵⁹ Though not likely in the traditional site; see Rapske, *Custody*, 125–26; Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 108.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Most veterans had settled Philippi some eight decades earlier, and soldiers were typically discharged around age thirty-seven. They were also retired and had higher status than such jobs entailed.

¹⁷⁶¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 244–47, 262–63; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.19.1–10.20.2; cf. Gen 39:21–23. Still, such slaves could be wealthy (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.31.2; 10.32).

applies to the jailer's staff (16:29) than to himself.¹⁷⁶² This jailer has a nearby home (16:27, 32–34) and household (16:31–33).

Ordered to keep them securely (16:23), the jailer confines them to *the innermost cell in stocks* (16:24; cf. Jer 20:2). Though weakened by beating, the missionaries receive the harshest custody normally reserved for the most serious crimes.¹⁷⁶³ (The stocks and inner prison also highlight the miraculous nature of their release.)

At least for the night, the other prisoners are also probably kept in *the innermost cell* (16:24)¹⁷⁶⁴ (despite the darkness, Paul can account for them in 16:28). Chains (16:26) were standard in public city prisons,¹⁷⁶⁵ but stocks (16:24) were normally reserved for prisoners of the lowest social status.¹⁷⁶⁶ Despite exceptions, guards were usually harsh,¹⁷⁶⁷ and sadistic jailers could fix prisoners' legs in a variety of uncomfortable positions in holes in these wooden devices anchored to the cold, filthy floor.¹⁷⁶⁸ (Naturally they lacked access to toilet facilities.) Luke uses this term for *stocks* (*xulon*, "wood") elsewhere in Acts only for the cross (5:30; 10:39; 13:29), connecting their sufferings with that of their Lord.

16:25–34: DELIVERANCE AND JAILER'S CONVERSION

When the missionaries worship God in the face of their suffering, God vindicates them after their public humiliation. Their mission in resistant Philippi now reaches beyond a God-fearing resident alien's household to an entirely pagan Macedonian one, the father of whom had some civic responsibility. Although in fact some other individuals in the city had already been converted (cf. 16:40), Luke as a good narrator focuses on the most graphic incidents.

¹⁷⁶² Prison directors were paid better than legionaries, and often gained further wealth through bribery and extortion (Rapske, *Custody*, 259–61). For bribes, see, e.g., Lucian, *Tox.* 31.

¹⁷⁶³ Cf. Rapske, *Custody*, 9, 126.

¹⁷⁶⁴ As in some other cases (Rapske, *Custody*, 202–3). The tightness of bodies in prisons often generated suffocating heat during the day, as well as spreading sickness (Rapske, *Custody*, 196–97, 204, 220–21).

¹⁷⁶⁵ Rapske, *Custody*, 9, 25–28.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Rapske, *Custody*, 127.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Philo, *Jos.* 81–84; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.35; Rapske, *Custody*, 254–59, 264.

¹⁷⁶⁸ Rapske, *Custody*, 126–27. Although possibly an overnight "security precaution" (cf. Lucian, *Tox.* 150–51; Rapske, *Custody*, 127), prisoners could remain in stocks for days (Lysias, *Or.* 10.16, §117).

Following Jesus's teaching (Luke 6:22–23) and paralleling the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 4:23–30; 5:41), the wounded preachers worship and pray to God while suffering.¹⁷⁶⁹ Even biblically illiterate ancient hearers who respected sages might respect their consistency with their beliefs; the ideal wise person should thank and praise God for any circumstance,¹⁷⁷⁰ and should not be disturbed even by imprisonment.¹⁷⁷¹ Not only did the other prisoners hear them (Acts 16:25), presumably unavoidably, but they apparently were influenced by them (see 16:28).

Since hearings often took place in the morning, the prisoners singing *about midnight* (16:25) might now have untreated wounds over twelve hours old.¹⁷⁷² Apart from exceptional circumstances (20:7; Luke 11:5; 2 Cor 11:27), *midnight* was normally a time for sleep,¹⁷⁷³ though conditions such as wounds and stocks would make this difficult. But as the biblically literate Paul surely knew, the faithful might praise God at midnight, even despite captivity (Ps 119:61–62).¹⁷⁷⁴

An earthquake follows their prayers (16:26), as earlier after prayers in the Jerusalem church (4:31; cf. Ps 96:7–11; 98:4–7; 99:1–3). God vindicates as in other liberations in Acts (Acts 5:19; 12:7–10) or gentile stories about Dionysiac liberation¹⁷⁷⁵ – except that here Luke narrates a *nonescape*.

Aroused by the earthquake or a subordinate's report, the jailer finds the *doors wide open* (16:27). Hearing no injured prisoners groaning, however, he reasonably assumes that the prisoners have escaped.¹⁷⁷⁶ Prison keepers could be killed in prison breaks (Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.4.8), but the jailer's concern now is the consequences of the escape. Luke has already underlined the potentially serious consequences of divine escapes for jailers

¹⁷⁶⁹ On the singing, see discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 3:2492–94.

¹⁷⁷⁰ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.6.1; 4.7.9; Marc. Aur. 6.16; cf. 1 *En.* 108.10.

¹⁷⁷¹ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.12.23; 1.16.15; 1.29.22–29; 4.1.133; even Epicurus in Diogenes Laertius 10.118. Although the historical Paul experienced discouragements and anxieties (2 Cor 4:8; 7:5–6; 11:28–29; 1 Thess 3:5), he also affirmed thanking God in all situations (1 Thess 5:18; cf. Eph 5:20).

¹⁷⁷² Schnabel, *Acts*, 688 (esp. n. 48).

¹⁷⁷³ E.g., Polybius 9.18.6; Ovid, *Metam.* 10.368.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Cf. Ps 42:8; also deliverance at midnight (Exod 11:4; 12:29; Philo, *Mos.* 1.135; cf. Acts 27:27).

¹⁷⁷⁵ An earthquake in Euripides, *Bacch.* 585–93, 642–43 and prison doors flying open in Ovid, *Metam.* 3.699–700. The most complete parallels appear in Weaver, *Epiphany*, 270–71, though most are not limited to Dionysiac contexts. In *LAB* 6:17, God rescued Abram from a burning furnace by sending an earthquake.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Even today, prisoners have escaped after earthquakes, e.g., in 2011 in eastern Turkey; in 2013 in Haiti and Indonesia; the British Virgin Islands in 2017; again in Indonesia in 2018.

(12:19; cf. 27:42), and until 16:28 even the first-time reader expects that the preachers have escaped (cf. 5:19; 12:7–10).

The jailer prepares to meet a tragic end. Historically, punishments of jailers would be based on “the degree of culpability” and the number and status of the prisoners.¹⁷⁷⁷ The authorities could deem the earthquake as an act of God, but could judge the jailer negligent if both he (16:27) and his guards were asleep.¹⁷⁷⁸ Suicide was considered more honorable than execution or, as far likelier in this case, public shame;¹⁷⁷⁹ Romans who committed suicide typically fell on their swords.¹⁷⁸⁰

A Closer Look: Ancient Suicide¹⁷⁸¹

Some chose suicide to end their wasting disease, decline, or other slow, excruciating deaths.¹⁷⁸² Some killed themselves out of loyalty to or mourning for others,¹⁷⁸³ especially a loved one.¹⁷⁸⁴ More relevant here, many considered suicide an appropriate remedy for disgrace.¹⁷⁸⁵ One might be suspected of suicide to evade noncapital, but shameful, prosecution (Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.5).

Many killed themselves to escape death at the hands of their enemies in battle or in the face of impending slaughter.¹⁷⁸⁶ This principle also applied to escaping tortures,¹⁷⁸⁷ or killing oneself rather than being executed.¹⁷⁸⁸ Even a Jew might consider suicide (or death at the hands of a merciful

¹⁷⁷⁷ Rapske, *Custody*, 30–31.

¹⁷⁷⁸ A jailer could delegate the night watch (Lucian, *Tox.* 30). Punishments for falling asleep on night watch could be severe (Diodorus Siculus 2.18.8; see comment on Acts 12:19).

¹⁷⁷⁹ A novel reports a guard’s intention to kill himself when a body he was guarding was stolen (Petronius, *Sat.* 112).

¹⁷⁸⁰ E.g., Velleius Paterculus 2.6.7; 2.27.5; 2.63.2; 2.69.2; 2.70.2–5; 2.74.4; 2.76.1.

¹⁷⁸¹ Condensed from Keener, *Acts*, 3:2498–2507.

¹⁷⁸² Pliny, *Nat.* 6.24.2–5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 77/78.44; Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.30; Suetonius, *Rhet.* 6; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.12.1–4; 3.7.1–2; 6.24.3–4.

¹⁷⁸³ Velleius Paterculus 2.76.1; Suetonius, *Jul.* 89; *Otho* 12.2; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.49; 1 Sam 31:4–5.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Sophocles, *Antig.* 1234–36, 1282–83, 1315–16; *Wom. Tr.* 721–22, 891, 923–35; Valerius Maximus 4.6.2–5; 4.7.5; 6.8.3, 4; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 64.4; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.16.6–12; Suetonius, *Aug.* 13.2.

¹⁷⁸⁵ E.g., Polybius 33.5.2; Diodorus Siculus 12.19.2; Justin, *Epit.* 16.5.3–4; Virgil, *Aen.* 10.681–82; Quintus Curtius 9.7.25; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.9; 14.37; 15.71; 16.3; Suetonius, *Galba* 3.4.

¹⁷⁸⁶ E.g., Thucydides 3.81.3; Polybius 2.31.2; Velleius Paterculus 2.6.7; 2.7.2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.46; 4.50; 14.37; *Hist.* 2.49; Suetonius, *Otho* 11.2; Plutarch, *Otho* 17.3.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Diodorus Siculus 20.71.4; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.45; or prison in Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.2; 13.1.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.31; 3.15, 42; 4.19, 28, 30; 6.29, 48; 11.3; 13.30; 15.35, 59; 16.11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 35; Dio Cassius 17.15.4; 18.4.6; 57.18.10.

friend) more honorable than letting another kill one (Josephus, *Life* 137) or sexually abuse one's body (4 Macc 17:1).

Most gentiles deemed suicide honorable under appropriate circumstances,¹⁷⁸⁹ such as avoiding capture (Josephus, *War*. 6.362), suffering defeat,¹⁷⁹⁰ or being forced by another to die.¹⁷⁹¹ Under most circumstances, however, suicide was dishonorable,¹⁷⁹² often requiring dishonorable burials.¹⁷⁹³ Many Jews also allowed "noble" suicides,¹⁷⁹⁴ though others reasoned against it.¹⁷⁹⁵ Christian tradition has historically rejected suicide.¹⁷⁹⁶ Dissuading one from suicide (Acts 16:28) was often seen as virtuous.¹⁷⁹⁷ ****

Because there are torches outside (16:29), those in the darkened inner cell could apparently see the jailer through the opened doorway, as well as recognizing that no one had exited it (16:28).¹⁷⁹⁸ Aside from any dissuasion by Paul (given possible spiritual influence on them, 16:25; cf. Luke 23:41–43), there were likely armed guards outside (16:29). Prisoners need not have known that the outer doors were also open, and they would also recognize that escape rather than awaiting trial "would require leaving the city and the region permanently."¹⁷⁹⁹

¹⁷⁸⁹ E.g., Demosthenes, *Philippics* 3.62; Velleius Paterculus 2.26.3; 2.27.5; 2.88.3; 2.87.1; Josephus, *War* 6.187; *Ag. Ap.* 1.236; Plutarch, *Br. Wom.*, *Mor.* 253DE; *Themist.* 31.5. So also Stoics, e.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 3.18.60; Seneca, *Dial.* 7.19.1; *Ep. Lucil.* 70; 77; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.2.1–3; 1.25.21; limited to the wise in Arius Didymus 2.7.11m, p. 90.30–34; p. 92.1–3.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Herodotus 1.82; Justin, *Epit.* 4.5.10; 19.3.12; 32.4.8; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 12.9.60; Dio Cassius 48.44.1; 51.15.3.

¹⁷⁹¹ Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.37–38; Suetonius, *Nero* 49.2.

¹⁷⁹² E.g., Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 5.11.3, 1138a; Lucian, *Peregr.* 1, 25.

¹⁷⁹³ Pliny, *Nat.* 36.24.107–8; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 64.3; Plutarch, *Themist.* 22.2; Ps.-Quintilian, *Decl.* 335; 337; Aulus Gellius 15.10.2; Josephus, *War* 3.377–78. For debates about admittance to Hades, see (facetiously) Lucian, *True Story* 2.7, 21.

¹⁷⁹⁴ E.g., 1 Sam 31:4–5; 2 Sam 17:23; 2 Macc 14:37–46; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.358; *War.* 1.271–72; 2.49, 475–76; 3.331; 4.79–80; 7.341–88.

¹⁷⁹⁵ Wis 1:12–16 (in principle); Josephus, *War* 3.355–91 (esp. 3.369–72); *Life* 137; *Gen. Rab.* 34:13.

¹⁷⁹⁶ E.g., Justin, 2 *Apol.* 4; D. W. Amundsen, "Suicide and Early Christian Values," pages 77–153 in *Suicide and Euthanasia: Historical and Contemporary Themes* (ed. B. A. Brody; Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer, 1989).

¹⁷⁹⁷ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 18.33–34; Diodorus Siculus 4.52.5; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.15.4–12.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Moreover, shackles released from the walls were still attached to their bodies, making any egress loud.

¹⁷⁹⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, 690. Escape from custody was a criminal act under Roman law (at least requiring completion of the sentence, Pliny, *Ep.* 10.58.2); refusing to escape when the opportunity presented itself might gain the attention and favor of officials (Lucian, *Tox.* 33).

In 16:28, Paul makes the announcement for all the prisoners; characteristically, he assumes leadership in many difficult situations (27:21, 31–32, 43; 28:6–10). The preachers' refusal to escape (16:28) highlights the irony of their maximum security confinement (16:23): far from being subversive rabble-rousers, they are law-abiding Roman citizens (16:37).

Prisons were known for their oppressive darkness, especially in the securest inner cells,¹⁸⁰⁰ so the jailer calls for lanterns or torches (16:29). Separating them from the other prisoners, the jailer addresses them as *Sirs* (*kurioi*, 16:30). In direct address, *kurios* can mean simply, "Sir," but it can also mean, "lord." The preachers deflect the praise (as in 14:14–15) to Jesus: they are not "lords," but he should believe in the "Lord" Jesus (16:31).

What must I do to be saved? (16:30) reflects a common Lukan construction (2:37; 22:10; Luke 3:10, 12, 14; 10:25; 18:18; cf. Mark 10:17), the varied answers illustrating the contours of repentance and faith: trusting Jesus (Acts 16:31), and so abandoning possessions (Luke 3:11; 18:22–24; cf. Acts 2:44–45), prejudice (Luke 10:27–37), and exploitation (3:13–14).

Prior information allows the jailer to frame the question in terms of salvation. Urban prisons normally kept logs of prisoners and their alleged offenses,¹⁸⁰¹ and for days the mantic slave had been proclaiming these preachers as revealing *a way of salvation* (16:17).

We cannot know whether his household (which could, e.g., consist of servants) included minor children; only that all received the message (16:32). Households usually followed the faith of their head (as in 10:2), so the natural expectation was that his household, hearing the message, would follow him in faith and baptism (16:31–33; though Luke recognizes that households were not always converted together, Luke 12:51–53; 14:26; 18:29).

Bringing the missionaries into his home (16:34)¹⁸⁰² is risky, especially given the witnesses present (16:28–29).¹⁸⁰³ The jailer, recently prepared for suicide in 16:27, now is "ready to risk" "his career and professional prestige"; this is a radical conversion.¹⁸⁰⁴ In short, the man has been "saved" (16:30–31), and has thereby joined the ranks of the oppressed, as Paul had earlier (cf. 9:16).

¹⁸⁰⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 199–202; cf. also Maximus of Tyre 36.4.

¹⁸⁰¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 263.

¹⁸⁰² Jailers sometimes lived onsite (e.g., Aristaenetos, *Erotic Letters* 1.20.9–11).

¹⁸⁰³ If they were his servants, servants were often loyal to the slaveholders in legal cases, but could be tortured for information (e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.67; 4.29; Suetonius, *Galba* 10.5).

¹⁸⁰⁴ González, *Acts*, 194.

The prisoners' wounds would have become filthy before they dried, given, e.g., the human and rodent feces likely in their cell; infection could set in quickly.¹⁸⁰⁵ Ironically, in the same sentence in which the jailer washes their wounds (16:33), they wash him in baptism.¹⁸⁰⁶ Perhaps the jailer had private access to water; otherwise, more conspicuously, two public fountains lay in the north of the forum, with another bath complex to its east.¹⁸⁰⁷ After an order to keep them securely (16:23), removing them from the jail would be punishable; laxity in restraints was deemed negligence or complicity.¹⁸⁰⁸

Baptism takes priority even over the hospitality obligation of assuaging hunger (16:34). The prisoners have probably eaten nothing of substance since their beating; prisoners normally depended on outside help to supplement their diet – and never a jailer's own food in his own home!¹⁸⁰⁹ Dining with a prisoner was punishable, potentially even by death (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.230–33).¹⁸¹⁰ Yet radical faithfulness to the gospel demanded no less (Luke 10:7–8). As often in Luke-Acts, conversions bring joy (e.g., 8:8, 39; cf. Luke 8:13; 10:20).

That Paul and Silas embrace this hospitality reinforces Luke's larger portrait of eating with gentiles (11:3). Even if they eat only plant products, the food would not fit the strictest Jewish standards;¹⁸¹¹ nevertheless, they follow Jesus's instructions to eat what is set before them (Luke 10:8).

Just as the charge that Paul is non-Roman (16:21) is false (16:37), it has now become false that following Jesus is a foreign custom not accepted by Philippian Romans (16:20, 34).

16:35–40: PAUL AND SILAS VINDICATED

Despite Luke's upbeat narration here, Paul and Silas must leave quickly; Paul's own recollection of his Philippian suffering is not fond (1 Thess 2:2).

¹⁸⁰⁵ Rapske, *Custody*, 216–18; only high-status prisoners might be able to bathe daily (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.202).

¹⁸⁰⁶ Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 36; Bede, *Comm. Acts* 16.33.

¹⁸⁰⁷ Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 103–7. A nearby early chapel might suggest an early tradition of Paul's jail nearby?

¹⁸⁰⁸ Rapske, *Custody*, 390–91, with much documentation.

¹⁸⁰⁹ Rapske, *Custody*, 213.

¹⁸¹⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 392.

¹⁸¹¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 215. Some captured priests subsisted on figs and nuts rather than accept unclean food (Josephus, *Life* 13–14).

Nevertheless, Luke puts the best face – a thankful interpretation (cf. Acts 16:25) – on this difficult experience.¹⁸¹²

In the morning, probably early,¹⁸¹³ the magistrates, having satisfied yesterday's mob, send to release the preachers (16:35).¹⁸¹⁴ Perhaps they never intended long-range punishment beyond the initial, public show of force. Perhaps the earthquake, though probably localized,¹⁸¹⁵ gave the magistrates second thoughts. Pagans usually attributed earthquakes to the activities of deities¹⁸¹⁶ and viewed earthquakes as portents,¹⁸¹⁷ although many intellectuals sought alternative explanations.¹⁸¹⁸ Perhaps the jailer sent word about their honorable behavior in the wake of the quake.¹⁸¹⁹

But Paul and Silas have apparently learned from the jailer how seriously Philippi took its Romanitas, and now they play it for what it is worth. They may have to leave Philippi, but they will not leave behind a church enduring the stigma of their conviction. Paul's *us* in 16:37 includes Silas, presuming that he is also a Roman citizen; this information is consistent with Paul's Latin name for Silas in his epistles, "Silvanus."¹⁸²⁰

Luke here introduces a strategy that will be foundational for the trial narratives of Acts 22–26 and especially Paul's appeal to Caesar.¹⁸²¹ To beat and imprison Roman citizens without trial (16:37) was itself a criminal offense. The officials, who abused these Jewish preachers for undermining Roman customs (16:21), now discover that they themselves might need to answer to Rome for abusing Romans (16:37). In an ironic, comic

¹⁸¹² There was presumably "some face-saving on both sides" (Dunn, *Acts*, 224).

¹⁸¹³ People of rank normally attended to business early in the mornings; Horace, *Sat.* 1.1.9–10; *Ep.* 2.1.103–5; Plutarch, *R.Q.* 84, *Mor.* 284D; Martial, *Epig.* 3.36.1–3; governors in Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.66.147; Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.3; senators for meetings, Cicero, *Fam.* 1.2.4; Plutarch, *Cic.* 15.3; 19.1.

¹⁸¹⁴ "Those men" is again a Lukan formulation (cf., e.g., "these men" in 5:35, 38; 16:17, 20; 19:37; more in Greek).

¹⁸¹⁵ Like most Greek earthquakes; see G. D. R. Sanders, "Urban Corinth: An Introduction," pages 11–24 in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (ed. D. N. Schowalter and S. J. Friesen; HTS 53; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 13.

¹⁸¹⁶ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 7.445; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.20.

¹⁸¹⁷ E.g., Thucydides 2.8.3; Ovid, *Metam.* 15.798; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.86.200.

¹⁸¹⁸ E.g., Seneca, *Nat. Q.* Bk. 6 (esp. 6.5.1–6.31.3); cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 2.81.191–92.

¹⁸¹⁹ He could not simply release them directly without himself becoming a fugitive, abandoning public office (Valerius Maximus 4.7.3).

¹⁸²⁰ See Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 70–71; esp. Judge, *First Christians*, 562.

¹⁸²¹ See H. Omerzu, "Der Apostel als Angeklagter – juristische Verfahren gegen Paulus in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas," *Jahrbuch der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (2002): 126–37 (130).

upturn, although the authorities used force to put Paul and Silas in the prison, they must now use entreaty to get them out, inverting the public humiliation.

A Closer Look: Paul's Roman Citizenship

Most scholars today accept Luke's claim that Paul was a Roman citizen.¹⁸²² Some question Luke's claim, however,¹⁸²³ because, first, Paul's letters do not mention it. This objection constitutes a classic argument from silence, especially given Paul's opposition to boasting in worldly social status (2 Cor 11:16, 30; 12:1, 5, 9–11; Phil 3:7). Even in Acts, Paul raises it only under duress. Paul's own letters reveal training and skills characteristic of a high-status background.¹⁸²⁴ Had we not Paul's incidental claim in Phil 3:5, minimalists might also deem Luke's high-status depiction of Paul's Pharisaism merely Luke's fiction.

Second, some claim that this privilege belonged only to municipal elites;¹⁸²⁵ inscriptions, however, readily refute this claim.¹⁸²⁶ Third, some insist that most locales would require Roman citizens' involvement in pagan practices, precluding Jewish citizens.¹⁸²⁷ Again, inscriptions refute this,¹⁸²⁸

¹⁸²² Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 144 ("almost universally admitted"); see, e.g., Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 6–13; Riesner, *Early Period*, 147–56; S. A. Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen: Roman Citizenship in the Ancient World and Its Importance for Understanding Acts 22:22–29," pages 309–26 in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (ed. S. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2008); G. Theissen, "Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Community: Further Remarks on J. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*," *JSNT* 25 (3, 2003): 371–91 (372–74); idem, "The Social Setting of Pauline Communities," pages 248–67 in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (ed. S. Westerholm; Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 248–49.

¹⁸²³ See esp. W. Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" *ZNW* 78 (3, 1987): 200–29; B. Seul, *Rettung für alle: Die Romreise des Paulus nach Apg 27,1–28, 16* (Berlin: Philo, 2003), 358–65.

¹⁸²⁴ See R. F. Hock, "Paul's Tentmaking and the Problem of His Social Class," *JBL* 97 (4, 1978): 555–64 (564); also R. M. Grant, *Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 52; cf. Gal 1:14; B. Holmberg, "The Methods of Historical Reconstruction in the Scholarly 'Recovery' of Corinthian Christianity," pages 255–71 in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (ed. E. Adams and D. G. Horrell; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 263. Luke's depiction of Paul as an artisan challenges claims that he inflates Paul's status artificially.

¹⁸²⁵ Stegemann, "Römischer Bürger," 226.

¹⁸²⁶ S. M. Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus: The Apostle among His Contemporaries" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1990), 175–77, 195.

¹⁸²⁷ Stegemann, "Römischer Bürger," 220–21, 225.

¹⁸²⁸ Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 169; B. Rapske, "Citizenship, Roman," *DNTB* 215–18 (216). For the lack of direct link between citizenship and religious practice, see now S. Krauter,

as does Josephus.¹⁸²⁹ Some Judean Roman citizens were even equestrians (*War* 2.308), a status Luke never offers for Paul. Because most freed slaves of citizens in Rome became citizens, the capital had an entire community of Jewish Roman citizens (Philo, *Embassy* 155–57).¹⁸³⁰

Fourth, some complain that Paul never identifies himself in his letters with the *tria nomina* used for citizens in inscriptions. But Paul is not writing inscriptions; letters rarely use the *tria nomina* (e.g., Pliny uses one or at most two names), especially in the Greek east.¹⁸³¹ Indeed, Jewish Roman citizens did not use the *tria nomina* even on their funerary inscriptions.¹⁸³² Paul uses just one name for other Romans (cf. Rom 16:3–23; 1 Cor 1:14; 16:17), and Luke never uses more than two even for governors (Acts 4:27; 13:7; 24:27).

Fifth, Roman citizens should not be beaten with rods (2 Cor 11:25). Yet as noted above, in the provinces Roman citizens sometimes suffered this or harsher disciplines, despite Roman law.¹⁸³³ For example, a governor later crucified Judeans who were not only Roman citizens but *equestrians* – technically of the same rank as most procurators (Josephus, *War* 2.306–8). Early Christian sources offer a clear-eyed picture of inequity in the provinces (Acts 24:26; Luke 23:22–25). Finally, at 16:22–23 this commentary has addressed the supposed incongruity of citizens waiting till after the abuse to announce citizenship. Whether the strategy is Paul’s or Luke’s, the delay proves useful for the mission (cf. 22:24–29).

Luke need offer little defense of Paul’s citizenship, because most would take it for granted. The respectable Roman name “Paul” is nearly always a cognomen, is uncommon in the east, and would be extremely unusual for a Jew who was not a Roman citizen.¹⁸³⁴ Paul got his Roman name

Bürgerrecht und Kulturelle Teilhabe (BZNWK 127; New York: de Gruyter, 2004; brought to my attention by Andreas Bendlin).

¹⁸²⁹ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 14.137, 228, 231–32, 234, 235–37, 240; *War* 1.194; 2.308; noted in Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 144; Rapske, *Custody*, 87–90.

¹⁸³⁰ Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 11–14, thus complains that Stegemann’s theory simply neglects the hard evidence of ancient sources.

¹⁸³¹ Baugh, “Paul and Ephesus,” 171–73.

¹⁸³² S. Légasse, “Paul’s Pre-Christian Career according to Acts,” pages 365–90 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 371.

¹⁸³³ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 133; Légasse, “Career,” 370; Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 741. Luke’s focus on Paul’s status and innocence may lead him to focus on occasions where his citizenship helped.

¹⁸³⁴ See Lüdemann, *Christianity*, 241; G. Theissen, “The Social Setting of Pauline Communities,” pages 248–67 in Westerholm, *Blackwell Companion to Paul*, 249; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 144, 590; Baugh, “Paul and Ephesus,” 173–74; Riesner, *Early Period*, 145–46; Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 8–9.

somewhere; it was hardly merely for decoration in Jerusalem (cf. 22:3; Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:5).

Further, only as a citizen would Paul's appeal to the emperor likely succeed (25:10–12). Whereas Luke had no apologetic reason (especially in a we-section!) to invent Paul's transport in custody, it is difficult to explain without an appeal, the successful granting of which is even more difficult to explain apart from his citizenship.¹⁸³⁵ The final quarter of Acts, the most detailed narrative at the heart of Luke's we-material, rests on this premise. Despite concern about Judean opposition (Rom 15:31), Paul ends up in Roman custody in Jerusalem and then ends up in custody in Rome (Phil 4:22). Was it only coincidental that, historically, Paul hoped to visit Rome next (Rom 15:24–29)?

Although Luke raises Paul's citizenship in just two passages, it coheres with his implied membership in the synagogue of the freedpersons (Acts 6:9; 7:58), which fits knowledge of how most Jewish Roman citizens achieved their citizenship.¹⁸³⁶ Were Luke merely *inventing* such citizenship, why allow the inference that Paul was descended from freedpersons (a status issue), or why not make him an equestrian? One may also offer other arguments supporting his Roman citizenship.¹⁸³⁷ ****

Raising their citizenship now does not spare the preachers injury, but it may secure greater respect for their mission than an ignominious departure would (16:37–39). The church in Philippi suffered further opposition (Phil 1:28–30), but not as serious as that in Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:6; 2:14; 3:4–5), where Paul's departure was clearly ignominious (Acts 17:10). Ancient sources regularly link prisons and bonds with shame,¹⁸³⁸ creating even for friends public “pressure to abandon the prisoner.”¹⁸³⁹

Since one could be executed for claiming yet failing to prove Roman citizenship,¹⁸⁴⁰ and Paul is being released anyway, the magistrates have every reason to take this citizenship claim at face value. The officials have

¹⁸³⁵ See Riesner, *Early Period*, 155–56; Légasse, “Career,” 371–72; H. Omerzu, “Fallstudie: Der Prozess des Paulus,” pages 247–52 in *Prolegomena-Quellen-Geschichte* (ed. K. Erlemann and K. L. Noethlich; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 248; Lüdemann, *Christianity*, 240–41.

¹⁸³⁶ See also P. van Minnen, “Paul the Roman Citizen,” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 43–52.

¹⁸³⁷ E.g., the second person in Rom 13:6–7 (Haacker, *Theology*, 121 n. 19); the proportion of citizens in Paul's circle (E. A. Judge, “The Roman Base of Paul's Mission,” *TynBul* 56 [1, 2005]: 103–17; idem, *First Christians*, 553, 556–57, 563–66); or his focus on colonies or Spain even when their Jewish populations were small.

¹⁸³⁸ Rapske, *Custody*, 288–91, 296–97.

¹⁸³⁹ B. Rapske, “Prison, Prisoner,” *DNTB* 827–30 (830).

¹⁸⁴⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 87.

reason to fear (16:38; cf. 22:29), given their lack of proper investigation;¹⁸⁴¹ civic officials routinely consulted governors or Rome for even minor matters. In principle, the preachers could recoup their honor by initiating a case against the magistrates themselves.¹⁸⁴² The magistrates could be disqualified from public office; their city could lose privileges.¹⁸⁴³ At this stage, asking him to prove his citizenship would simply prolong their public embarrassment.

A “secret” expulsion (16:37) would eliminate complications for the magistrates, but Paul demands a reversal of his public shaming. The prison was probably close to the forum, so many would see (and circulate word) about the magistrates humbly escorting¹⁸⁴⁴ out those they had beaten the previous day.¹⁸⁴⁵ An honorary escort for a *de facto* expulsion was not full vindication, but at least local Christians would be able to appeal to “public knowledge” that their foreign founders were acknowledged innocent.

Although accommodating the officials’ request to leave (16:39), Paul and Silas act unintimidated (cf. 14:20; 18:18; 20:1).¹⁸⁴⁶ Like Peter stopping at Mary’s house after his escape in 12:7–12, they first meet the believers, perhaps becoming a house congregation, in Lydia’s home (16:40). As she once exhorted (*parakaleô*) Paul’s company to stay with her (16:15), they now exhort (*parakaleô*) Lydia’s group of believers, probably to stand firm in the faith (as in 14:22; cf. 11:23; 20:2).

17:1–9: MINISTRY IN THESSALONICA

The Via Egnatia passed through Philippi’s forum, roughly 1,300 feet (400 meters) further to the city’s western gate. Paul and Silas follow it westward,

¹⁸⁴¹ Even a lictor thrusting one aside rather than letting one speak provoked widespread anger (Livy 3.45.5–6).

¹⁸⁴² Rapske, *Custody*, 300–2; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 71–72; Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 49. See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.70.2; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.1.3.8; 2.5.66.170; Livy 10.9.4; *Select Papyri* 2:186–89. Beating innocent people stirred outrage (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.54.142; *Fam.* 10.32.2; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.113; Macrobius, *Sat.* 4.4.18).

¹⁸⁴³ Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 201.

¹⁸⁴⁴ The NRSV’s “take/took out” (16:38–39) is too weak here. The “out” (*ex-*) prefix also contrasts with the missionaries going “into” (*eis-*) Lydia’s home in 16:40.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Philippi displayed an especially lavish interest in status and public honor; cf. J. H. Hellerman, “The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi, Part 1,” *BSac* 160 (639, 2003): 321–36.

¹⁸⁴⁶ They probably also had some possessions at Lydia’s house, perhaps including leather-working tools (cf. 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7–9). Luke might be left behind to offer instruction and support.

33 miles (over 50 km) to Amphipolis, then 27 miles (40 km) further to Mygdonian Apollonia, and 35 miles (50 km) more to Thessalonica (17:1).¹⁸⁴⁷ If they made good time despite their wounds, the first two cities could be overnight stops. The longer journey to Thessalonica was downhill. Since it was no longer early morning when they left Philippi, however, this estimate might be too optimistic, unless Lydia and others sent them off with funds to rent equine transport.

Paul's experiences in Thessalonica (17:1–9) and Berea (17:10–14) should be read together (note parallels in 17:4, 12); these paragraphs juxtapose contrasting responses to Paul's ministry, a contrast Luke makes explicit in 17:11.

As on his first mission, Paul continues to reason from the Scriptures yet (especially in Thessalonica) faces Jewish opposition, just as Jesus did. As with Jesus (Luke 23:5), Paul is accused here of sedition (17:6–7), portending the later official charge in 24:5. The missionaries' perseverance here fits Luke's theology concerning Spirit-inspired bold preaching even in the face of persecution (e.g., Luke 12:4–12; 21:12–15; Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 5:32; cf. Phil 1:12–13), including in Paul's own brief recollection of his ministry in Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:5–6; 2:2, 13).

Luke's brevity in reporting about the church in Thessalonica is more likely due to his interest and his space and subject constraints than to information that was available; Luke or his source was apparently in Philippi at this time (16:10–17; cf. 20:5–6), and the Thessalonian church's testimony was widespread (1 Thess 1:7–9, even allowing for hyperbole). Luke apparently presupposes such knowledge, mentioning one "Jason" (17:5) without explanation, as if this person were already familiar to the ideal audience that he takes for granted.

Thessalonica was Macedonia's capital, where the proconsul resided, and also its most populous city by this period (Strabo 7.7.4), with estimates of forty thousand to sometimes above a hundred thousand residents.¹⁸⁴⁸ Thessalonica was also a self-ruled "free city" with its own coins. As Macedonia's largest port and located near the center of the Via Egnatia that connected east and west, Thessalonica was Greece's most prosperous

¹⁸⁴⁷ Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:121; Gill, "Macedonia," 410. For Amphipolis and Apollonia, see further Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 3–12; Strabo 7 frg. 33–35, 47; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.10.29.

¹⁸⁴⁸ On Thessalonica, see Finegan, *Apostles*, 109–16; Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 132–40; M. J. Vickers, "Hellenistic Thessaloniki," *JHS* 92 (1972): 156–70; Strabo 7.7.4; 7 frg. 20–21, 24.

mercantile city next to Corinth. Because Lydia was involved in trade (16:15), she may have provided some contacts in Thessalonica.

Paul dialogues in the *synagogue* (17:1–3),¹⁸⁴⁹ fitting his usual pattern (13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8), like that of Jesus (Luke 4:44). Paul often encounters opposition there (13:45, 50; 14:2; 18:6; 19:9), though not always (17:10–12, 17), and also finds converts there (18:7–8; 19:9), a variation that suggests historical information. Although Luke reports *three sabbath days* of dialogue (17:2),¹⁸⁵⁰ Paul may have been in Thessalonica longer (cf. Phil 4:15–16; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7–8), especially if he appointed leadership (1 Thess 5:12).¹⁸⁵¹ His discourse topics probably included the sort that appear more fully in Luke's speeches (Luke 24:25–26, 46; Acts 2:22–36; 13:16–41; 24:25–26; 26:22–23).

Many gentiles were persuaded (17:4; 1 Thess 1:9).¹⁸⁵² Some of the high-status women converts in Acts 17:4 (who may also be among *the devout Greeks*)¹⁸⁵³ may have become patrons (one sense of a participle in 1 Thess 5:12) of the mostly working-class congregation (4:11–12). Macedonian women could be especially independent, and women could be patronesses, sometimes even of cities.¹⁸⁵⁴ Nevertheless, such a limited number of elite converts could not forestall opposition; aristocratic women could exercise some influence (cf. Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.61.136), but men of the same class could circumvent it (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.560–61).

Hostility in Thessalonica inflicted significant suffering on Paul and believers there (1 Thess 1:6; 2:2; 3:2–5; 2 Thess 1:5), and, as in Acts 17, likely

¹⁸⁴⁹ For Jews in Macedonia, see Philo, *Embassy* 281; in Thessalonica, despite uncertain dating, see Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 154–56; Riesner, *Early Period*, 344–47. The Thessalonian correspondence includes Jewish eschatological ideas not likely intelligible to typical gentiles.

¹⁸⁵⁰ The term translated *argued* can include both argumentation and instruction, but Paul often does so “with” others (e.g., 17:17). For the frequent dialogic style in antiquity, see Johnson, *Acts*, 305–6. For analogies between rabbinic argumentation and diatribe, cf. R. Ulmer, “The Advancement of Arguments in Exegetical Midrash Compared to That of the Greek ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ,” *JSJ* 28 (1, 1997): 48–91.

¹⁸⁵¹ He also shared much Jesus tradition (1 Thess 4:15–5:7; 2 Thess 2:1–12).

¹⁸⁵² For various cults in Thessalonica, see K. P. Donfried, “The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence,” *NTS* 31 (3, 1985): 336–56; idem, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 22–29; H. Koester, *Paul and His World: Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 46–54; C. Steimle, *Religion im römischen Thessaloniki* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

¹⁸⁵³ Women comprised some 80 percent of God-fearers in inscriptions (Riesner, *Early Period*, 351).

¹⁸⁵⁴ E. A. Hemelrijk, “City Patronesses in the Roman Empire,” *Historia* 53 (2, 2004): 209–45.

included both Jewish and gentile elements (1 Thess 2:14–18).¹⁸⁵⁵ Ironically, it is those who accuse Paul of stirring unrest (17:6) who stir it (17:5). This fits Luke's apologetic regarding Paul and riots (cf. Acts 24:5): unrest derives from his opponents, whether gentile (16:19–22; 19:24–29) or Jewish (14:2, 5, 19; 17:13; 21:27–36).

Limited, later evidence suggests that Thessalonica's Jewish community may have been near the forum (17:6), and that the traditional Greek marketplace (17:5) was also nearby. Ancient literature suggests that idlers in the marketplace were easily stirred for rabble-rousers' political agendas, fitting that literature's frequent aristocratic disdain for demagogues.¹⁸⁵⁶ Thessalonica's unemployment rate was high and many lived off the public grain dole from the city or wealthy benefactors. Ancient moralists universally despised idleness, and appealing to base mobs to combat the virtuous was deemed vile.¹⁸⁵⁷

Understaffed administrations usually depended on accusers to get defendants to hearings (17:6; cf. 6:12; 18:12);¹⁸⁵⁸ sometimes the accused managed to postpone hearings for some time by ignoring a summons or remaining unavailable.¹⁸⁵⁹ Such behavior could, however, eventually lead to condemnation (Aeschines, *Embassy* 6; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.2.19–20), or to a heavy fine (Aeschines, *Tim.* 46). Unable to locate Paul (perhaps fortuitously; cf. Acts 19:29), his accusers drag out Jason, the host for Paul and probably the new house church.¹⁸⁶⁰ (Luke mentions Jason as if already known, perhaps because Luke's Macedonian audience knows him, or perhaps because Luke again condenses information overzealously.)¹⁸⁶¹ Attacking an opponent's supporters was common practice (e.g., Aeschines, *Tim.* 193–95).

¹⁸⁵⁵ Cf. Riesner, *Early Period*, 352; Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 200–2.

¹⁸⁵⁶ For untrustworthy and fickle mobs, see, e.g., Virgil, *Aen.* 1.148–53; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.29; Maximus of Tyre 27.6. For debased persons and loiterers in marketplaces, see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.33; 32.9.

¹⁸⁵⁷ See, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.8.3.

¹⁸⁵⁸ On using force to get someone to court, see A. W. Lintott, *The Romans in the Age of Augustus* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 18–19.

¹⁸⁵⁹ E.g., Suetonius, *Jul.* 23.1; cf. Cicero, *Verr.* 2.2.39.95. For examples of court summons, see *P. Hib.* 30.13–26; *P. Tebt.* 303; *P. Hamb.* 1.4.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Although a Greek name, “Jason” had long been used by Jews (e.g., 1 Macc 8:17; *CPJ* 3:179), and he is probably the Jason of Rom 16:21 (with Origen, *Commentary* 10.35–36 on Rom 16:21; Theodoret, *Commentary* 16.21). On patronage in Thessalonica, see H. L. Hendrix, “Benefactor/Patron Networks in the Urban Environment: Evidence from Thessalonica,” *Semeia* 56 (1991): 39–58.

¹⁸⁶¹ Cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 15.2, which mentions one “Caninius Rebilus” as if known; Suetonius had earlier described this case but apparently forgets that he omitted the official's name there (*Jul.* 76.2).

Ancient courts disadvantaged nonelites,¹⁸⁶² and it was customary to slander judicial opponents as harshly as possible (see comment on Acts 24:5). Deceptive accusers were, however, widely despised (see, e.g., Suetonius, *Tib.* 61.2–3). *The assembly* (Acts 17:5) was Thessalonica's citizen-body; in a "free city" they exercised judicial authority.¹⁸⁶³ *The city authorities* (*politarchai*, 17:6, 8) are the five or six politarchs, a title for civic officials used primarily in Macedonia. They convened the city council and citizen assembly, introduced motions, and attested civic decrees, and it was they whom Rome would hold responsible for keeping peace and stability in the city.¹⁸⁶⁴

More than in previous cases, the charges here are deadly: sedition and treason against the emperor (17:6–7). Paul's accusers could have acted in "the spirit of the imperial loyalty oaths" by searching for Paul, reporting his allies and even pursuing him to Berea (17:5–9, 13).¹⁸⁶⁵ Global hyperbole such as *turning the world upside down* (17:6) appears regularly in ancient literature,¹⁸⁶⁶ and was useful for inciting crowds. Their complaint may echo pagan charges against Jews roughly a decade earlier, as stirrers of unrest (*P. Lond.* 1912); officials may have been especially wary of Jewish preachers in the wake of Claudius's recent expulsion of some Jews from Rome (18:2). The irony here is that it is some Jews who so charge fellow Jews!

Given unrest often following Paul's activity (13:50; 14:5, 19) and the proximity of Philippi (16:19–22), the charge might carry some weight. Treason, or *maiestas*, encompassed a wide range of crimes.¹⁸⁶⁷ It included "assembling a mob," attempting to make another king, and so forth.¹⁸⁶⁸ Technically, *maiestas* was a matter of public law, not "decrees of Caesar" as stated here.¹⁸⁶⁹ But a number of imperial decrees could be relevant, and local magistrates' loyalty oath to the emperor would compel them to enforce such edicts.¹⁸⁷⁰

¹⁸⁶² E.g., *P. Ryl.* 119; *P. Fouad.* 26.21–24; Cicero, *Caecin.* 73. E.g., witnesses' reliability was regularly evaluated by their wealth (Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.136–44; Winter, *Left Corinth*, 62–64).

¹⁸⁶³ Aristocrats believed that such bodies were easily exploited, depending on the unlikely virtue of the masses (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.47–49).

¹⁸⁶⁴ See G. H. R. Horsley, "The Politarchs," pages 419–31 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 425; Riesner, *Early Period*, 358.

¹⁸⁶⁵ J. R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome* (WUNT 273; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 54.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., 24:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.1, 14; later, against Jews, in *CPJ* 2:78–79, §156c.

¹⁸⁶⁷ See Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 74–80; *Dig.* 48.4.1.1. As the greatest crime, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.80.1.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 76. Simply lamenting a member of the imperial family's death, when the person was not dead, could bring execution (Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.49–51).

¹⁸⁶⁹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 103; Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 32; Judge, *First Christians*, 456–57.

¹⁸⁷⁰ E. A. Judge, "The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica," *RTR* 30 (1, 1971): 1–7; idem, *First Christians*, 58–62. Cf. similarly later decrees against astrologers (Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.62; Suetonius, *Vit.* 14.4; *Dom.* 15).

The charge of treason would sound dangerously plausible.¹⁸⁷¹ The eschatological content of 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Thess 2:5, 15, probably recalling some of Paul's instruction while in Thessalonica (2 Thess 2:5), could be construed as predicting a new ruler and the timing of his reign,¹⁸⁷² emperors had already decreed that such predictions constituted treason.¹⁸⁷³ That a Roman governor executed Paul's rival "king" on the charge of *lese maiestas*¹⁸⁷⁴ made matters still worse.

Paul's accusers misunderstand (probably deliberately) Paul's message (less deliberately, cf. 17:18), like Jesus's accusers in Luke 23:2 (contrast 20:22–25). Still, Paul does announce a king whom God has enthroned (Luke 1:33; Acts 2:33–35), whose birth is set in deliberate contrast to the majesty of the emperor (Luke 2:1–14, a passage that also mentions Caesar's "decree" and "all the world," 2:1).¹⁸⁷⁵

Ensuring their zeal, Thessalonica regained only half a decade earlier a particular imperial favor lost under a previous emperor.¹⁸⁷⁶ They had an active imperial cult,¹⁸⁷⁷ and as a "free" city and the seat of the governor (who might well hear about these charges), the city would not risk its favored status by allowing talk of another king.¹⁸⁷⁸

As their host, Jason can be held responsible for his guests' local behavior, compelling him to post bond on their behalf to assure that there would be no more trouble.¹⁸⁷⁹ The permanent ties of guest-friendship obligated guest and host to mutual loyalty; not only for his own sake but for Jason's Paul must leave town (17:9–10).¹⁸⁸⁰

¹⁸⁷¹ Even today a number of interpreters find Paul's message to be subversive against the empire or imperialism; see, e.g., R. A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

¹⁸⁷² See Harrison, *Authorities*, 47–95; J. D. Weima, "'Peace and Security' (1 Thess 5.3): Prophetic Warning or Political Propaganda?" *NTS* 58 (2012): 331–59.

¹⁸⁷³ See Dio Cassius 56.25.5–6; 57.15.8; Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; esp. Judge, "Decrees."

¹⁸⁷⁴ Cf. R. E. Brown, *Death*, 968; Tajra, *Trial*, 36–42; Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 398. Tiberius reportedly viewed even negative remarks as *maiestas* (e.g., Suetonius, *Tib.* 58; Dio Cassius, *R.H.* 57.9.2; 57.19.1; 57.23.1–2).

¹⁸⁷⁵ See there Danker, *New Age*, 24.

¹⁸⁷⁶ Riesner, *Early Period*, 357.

¹⁸⁷⁷ See Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 36–38; B. W. Winter, "Divine Imperial Cultic Activities and the Early Church," 237–64 in Harding and Nobbs, *World*, 250–53. It may have been in the western part of Thessalonica (Gill, "Macedonia," 415).

¹⁸⁷⁸ Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 135; E. Green, "El anuncio del evangelio ante el poder imperial en Tesalónica," *Kairós* 39 (2006): 9–21.

¹⁸⁷⁹ He will (probably willingly) lose his deposit if it was meant to guarantee appearance in court (Lysias, *Or.* 23.9–10, §167; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *R.H.* 7.12.2); but he may lose it only if there is further trouble.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Cf. Cicero, who flees further while in exile so as not to bring suspicion against his host (*Att.* 3.4).

The punishment is, however, extraordinarily light for the weighty charge of *maiestas*; as in Philippi, officials accommodate the mob’s temporary mood.¹⁸⁸¹ The pledge from Jason quells the immediate unrest and also bars from Thessalonica any return of the unrest’s catalyst, during these officials’ term of office. Timothy could return to Thessalonica, but Paul could not (1 Thess 3:1–2). Once ratified by the citizen body, however, a decision could not be easily challenged by even a politarch.¹⁸⁸²

A Closer Look: 1 Thessalonians and Acts 17:1–9

Paul’s Thessalonian ministry fits securely in this second “missionary journey.”

Public humiliation in Philippi	1 Thess 2:2	Acts 16:22–23
Successful but persecuted ministry in Thessalonica	Phil 4:15–16; 1 Thess 1:1, 5–6	Acts 17:1–9
Paul in Athens	1 Thess 3:1	Acts 17:15–34
Paul in Achaia with his companions	2 Cor 1:19; cf. 1 Thess 3:6	Acts 18:1–18, esp. 18:5

Luke certainly does not draw on 1 Thessalonians for his picture here. Following a common ancient historical approach to condensing material,¹⁸⁸³ Luke omits Paul sending Timothy from Athens (1 Thess 3:2). Unlike Paul’s occasional mention of ministry in 1 Thessalonians, Luke characteristically emphasizes the Jewish element in opposition (Acts 17:5); Paul also probably presupposes a longer stay in Thessalonica than Luke reports (1 Thess 2:9). Nevertheless, by ancient standards these divergences are minor, and arguing from silence based on omissions is precarious, especially given the occasional nature of Paul’s letters and the brevity of Luke’s report about Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9).

¹⁸⁸¹ They may have understood the real issue as merely an association’s forbidden political activities; cf. J. K. Hardin, “Decrees and Drachmas at Thessalonica: An Illegal Assembly in Jason’s House (Acts 17.1–10a),” *NTS* 52 (1, 2006): 29–49.

¹⁸⁸² Horsley, “Politarchs,” 425.

¹⁸⁸³ See, e.g., Pelling, “Adaptation,” 127–28; Licona, *Differences*, 20, 36, 39, 72, 98; Keener, *Christobiography*, 285, 313.

Incidental parallels confirm the essential substance of Luke's narration.¹⁸⁸⁴

1 Thessalonians	Acts 17:1–9
The church knows Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1)	Luke implies the presence of Silas (17:10, 14) and Timothy (17:14)
Converts turned from idols (1:9)	Converts included gentiles (though many were already God-fearers; 17:4)
Paul preached eschatology (1:10; cf. 3:13; 4:13–5:11, especially 5:2), possibly including the kingdom (1 Thess 2:12; cf. 2 Thess 1:5) and a royal parousia (1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; ¹⁸⁸⁵ 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1, 8)	Paul was accused of preaching “another king,” Jesus (17:7)
Paul came to Thessalonica from Philippi, where he suffered shame (2:2)	They left Philippi under duress (16:40) and after traveling through two other towns en route reached Thessalonica (17:1)
Paul spoke boldly but faced much opposition (2:1–2), perhaps accused of being a charlatan (2:3–11) ¹⁸⁸⁶	They encountered opposition (17:5–9), including false accusations of being politically subversive (17:6–7)
They became like the Judean churches, suffering from their fellow Macedonians as Judean churches did from Judeans (2:14); this apparently began while Paul was with them (2:13–14) ¹⁸⁸⁷	The church had to suffer publicly (17:7, 9), though Paul's situation was more severe (17:10)
Some Jewish people have proved hostile to the gentile mission (2:16)	Paul faced Jewish opposition (17:5)
Satan thwarted their return (2:18); it was safe for Timothy to return, but not Paul (3:1–2)	The politarchs' decree against Paul made his return dangerous until they left office (17:8–10)
Unemployment was a major local problem (4:11–12; 2 Thess 3:6–12)	Unemployed men from the marketplace constituted a local problem (17:5)

¹⁸⁸⁴ The comparisons in Riesner, *Early Period*, 366–67, are still more detailed and more optimistic, noting that 1 Thessalonians confirms eighteen to nineteen of twenty-five details in Acts and other sources confirm four of the others.

¹⁸⁸⁵ The connection with “meeting” in 4:17 confirms the likelihood of this sense of parousia (see, e.g., E. Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* [BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977], 199; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* [WBC 45; Waco, TX: Word, 1982], 102).

¹⁸⁸⁶ See here A. J. Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse’: The Cynic Background to I Thess ii,” *NovT* 12 (2, 1970): 203–17.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Some scholars relate even some dying (4:13) to the persecution, though most demur.

17:10–14: MINISTRY IN BEREÄ

Although fleeing by night was often necessary (e.g., Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.11.19), some considered it cowardly (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.159). Thus Luke emphasizes Paul's courage (Acts 20:24; 21:13) and how others often averted danger to Paul (9:25, 30; 19:30–31; 21:12), as here (17:10, 14). Since laws in Greek cities applied only to their own territory, Paul and his companions keep moving; when their opponents pursue them, the opponents have to reinitiate their hostilities afresh (17:13; cf. 13:50–51; 14:20).

Paul may have planned to continue westward on the Egnatian Way, but a less-traveled route southward may delay assailants' pursuit (17:13).¹⁸⁸⁸ Berea (modern *Verria*) was not only not on the Egnatian Way westward; it was not even on the main highway south, near the coastline. Instead it was some 25 miles inland, in Mount Bermium's foothills (Strabo 7 frg. 26).¹⁸⁸⁹ The journey presumably took all that night as well as most of the next day, even if some Thessalonian Christians or sympathizers lent them animals for travel.¹⁸⁹⁰

Though out of the way, it was Macedonia's second most important city and the center of the province's imperial cult. It was heavily populated (Lucian, *Lucius* 34) and had its own Roman trading colony.¹⁸⁹¹ In Berea, he finds a nobler response than in Thessalonica. The Berean synagogue¹⁸⁹² searched the Scriptures, perhaps partly by communal memory and partly by means of a local Torah scroll (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 16.164), presumably in Greek translation. Paul clearly won converts there (Acts 17:14–15; 20:4).

Here, too, however, he soon faces opposition, as his nemeses from Thessalonica learn of his presence and arouse hostility (17:13; cf. earlier 14:19). Here, as in Thessalonica, Paul must be hurried out of town for

¹⁸⁸⁸ Learning of Claudius's expulsion (see 18:2) would also deter westward travel to Rome.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Most commentators cite the observation of Cicero, *Pis.* 36.89, speaking of an earlier fugitive from Thessalonica, that it was "out of the way."

¹⁸⁹⁰ A possible route was 30 miles west on the Via Egnatia to Pella, mounted during the night, then roughly 20 miles southwest to Berea (Gill, "Macedonia," 410).

¹⁸⁹¹ Riesner, *Early Period*, 360. On Berea, see Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 38–41; J. A. Pattengale, "Berea," *ABD* 1:675.

¹⁸⁹² Late (fourth or fifth century) evidence of the Jewish community there remains; see Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 157.

everyone's safety, perhaps before the conflict escalates as it had in Thessalonica. His guides graciously accompany him all the way to Athens, outside Macedonian jurisdictions. They may have taken a direct land route from Berea 30 miles southeast to Dion (or traveled first north if no such land route existed), then sailed to Athens, putting sufficient distance between himself and Macedonia and bypassing Thessaly, which was insignificant by this period (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.25).

17:15–21: BEGINNING MINISTRY IN ATHENS

In contrast to Macedonia, in this university town Paul experiences dialogue and some ridicule rather than violent persecution. This relative freedom allows for a shift in strategy that climaxes with Paul contextualizing his message as a Christian philosopher in 19:9.

That Paul historically spent time in Athens is clear (1 Thess 3:1), although he offers few details.¹⁸⁹³ The sequence of events also varies from 1 Thessalonians, supporting their independence and the points at which they overlap, while reminding us that Luke often abridges his information and simplifies his accounts.¹⁸⁹⁴ Despite Luke's positive depiction of Paul as sage,¹⁸⁹⁵ even Luke does not report overwhelming success. Nevertheless, the specific naming of two converts suggests knowledge of some converts; the association of one of them with the Areopagus (17:34) is impressive, though not on the level of 13:12.

By this period Athens was much smaller than Corinth or Thessalonica,¹⁸⁹⁶ a vestige of its former glory.¹⁸⁹⁷ Even academically some other

¹⁸⁹³ G. Lüdemann, *Paul: The Founder of Christianity* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2002), 126, suggests that Paul preached there, but was not well-received.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 136. On abridgement, see, e.g., 2 Macc 2:23–28; Theon, *Progymn.* 4.37–42, 80–82; Derrenbacker, *Compositional Practices*, 76, 91–92, 115; McGing, "Adaptation," 123–25.

¹⁸⁹⁵ A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989), 151–52. Paul's letters also draw on popular philosophy; see Malherbe, *Philosophers*; J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 270–333; J. N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (NovTSup 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961); D. A. deSilva, "Paul and the Stoa: A Comparison," *JETS* 38 (4, 1995): 549–64; T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

¹⁸⁹⁶ E.g., D. W. Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 113.

¹⁸⁹⁷ For its glorious past, e.g., Demosthenes, *Ep.* 3.11; Nepos 25 (Atticus), 3.3; Pliny, *Ep.* 8.24.2; Aelius Aristides, *Panath.* 2, 150D; it remained a popular subject of epideictic rhetoric, Aelius Aristides, *Panath.*; Plutarch, *Athenians More Famous in War or in Wisdom, Mor.*

centers had surpassed it,¹⁸⁹⁸ though its academic role persisted.¹⁸⁹⁹ It remained a center for rhetorical study (e.g., Plutarch, *Cic.* 4.1–2; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 362.19) and philosophic training (e.g., Cicero, *Off.* 1.1.1; *Tusc.* 2.11.26) in Roman times. Other intellectuals, however, criticized Athenians for their romanized addiction to gladiatorial slaughter (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.121–22). Luke presents Paul’s divine wisdom as superior to that of philosophy’s traditional queen city, much as Jewish storytellers recounted exploits with Athens or philosophers to authenticate their minority intellectual tradition against the wider values of the empire.¹⁹⁰⁰

Athens itself was at least 3 miles inland, so had smaller port towns on the coast (Pliny, *Nat.* 4.7.24).¹⁹⁰¹ *Full of idols* is no exaggeration.¹⁹⁰² Paul would begin seeing idols (17:16) immediately; sanctuaries lay in the ports (Pausanias 1.1.3–4), the top of Athena’s statue on the Acropolis was visible even from the main harbor,¹⁹⁰³ and sacred memorials lined the roads to Athens (Pausanias 1.29.2).

As soon as one entered Athens one would encounter idols and temples of Demeter, Poseidon, and soon Dionysus, Athena, Zeus, and Apollo (Pausanias 1.2.4–5). Further along one encountered Hestia, Ares, Aphrodite, Hephaistos, the Disocuri, Serapis, and again Zeus, Apollo, and Dionysus (1.8.3–4; 1.14.6–7; 1.18.2–6; 1.19.1–2; 1.20.2–3); en route to the

34C–351B (following Isocrates’s earlier *Panathenaic Oration*). On Athens, see further Finegan, *Apostles*, 126–30; Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 12–38; Schnabel, *Mission*, 1170–74; relevant publications of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, e.g., B. D. Benjamin and J. S. Traill, *The Athenian Agora: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* (vol. 15: *Inscriptions: The Athenian Councillors*; Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1974).

¹⁸⁹⁸ See, e.g., A. W. Argyle, “The Ancient University of Alexandria,” *CJ* 69 (4, 1974): 348–50.

¹⁸⁹⁹ Philodemus, *Death* 38.7–8; Justin, *Epit.* 17.3.11; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.25.4; Tacitus, *Dial.* 40; Lucian, *Nigr.* 12–14; *Fisherman* 42.

¹⁹⁰⁰ *Let. Aris.* 200–1; *Sipre Deut.* 307.4.2; *b. Bek.* 8b–9a. Later for Christians, U. Roberto, “From Hellenistic to Christian Universal History: Julius Africanus and the Athidographers on the Origins of Athens,” *ZAC* 14 (3, 2010): 525–39.

¹⁹⁰¹ Phalerum had altars of unknown gods (Pausanias 1.1.4), but Paul may have landed at the main port, Piraeus, to Athens’s southwest.

¹⁹⁰² Some guessed thirty thousand in the Mediterranean world as a whole (Hesiod, *W.D.* 252; Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 5.36.2).

¹⁹⁰³ Pausanias 1.1.1; 1.28.2; O. Broneer, “Athens, City of Idol Worship,” *BA* 21 (1, 1958): 2–28 (3–4); D. W. J. Gill, “Religion in a Local Setting,” pages 79–92 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 85–86.

Acropolis, Asclepius, Themis, Gaia, and Demeter (1.21.4; 1.22.1–3).¹⁹⁰⁴ The imperial cult was evident throughout the city.¹⁹⁰⁵

Idolatry also pervaded the agora, or marketplace (17:17).¹⁹⁰⁶ Though Paul probably spent more time in the large Roman *marketplace* (with its bustling activity) than in the monument-crowded eastern Greek one,¹⁹⁰⁷ he probably saw both (17:17). Athens was full of *hermae*, pillars with Hermes heads and erect phalli, many clustered at the agora's northwest corner.¹⁹⁰⁸ As usual (9:20; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10), Paul dialogues in the synagogue¹⁹⁰⁹ (17:17), although this time without reported conflict.

Paul dialogued with philosophers in the marketplace, probably in the shaded stoas. As often, Luke reports here a divided response.¹⁹¹⁰ Some suggest that the Epicureans mocked Paul as a *babbler* and the Stoics considered him as a proclaimer of foreign divinities (17:18, 34).¹⁹¹¹ Paul makes common ground where he can, sometimes dividing his audience (cf. 23:6–10); more common ground was available with Stoics.¹⁹¹² Like Pharisees, Stoics were more popular than their rivals (Sadducees and

¹⁹⁰⁴ If Paul ascended the Acropolis, he would have seen even more; for the Parthenon, see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.8; Pausanias 1.24.4–7; for other deities, Suetonius, *Aug.* 60; Pausanias 1.23.4, 7; 1.24.8, 14; 1.26.4–5; 1.27.1–2, 6; 1.28.4–6. For nearby Eleusis, where even Augustus was initiated (Suetonius, *Aug.* 93), see, e.g., G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); N. A. Evans, “Sanctuaries, Sacrifices, and the Eleusinian Mysteries,” *Numen* 49 (3, 2002): 227–54; K. Clinton, “Epiphany in the Eleusinian Mysteries,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004): 85–101.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Gill, “Achaia,” 433–53 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 443–44. Honorees included the current emperor, Claudius (*IG* 2.2.3269; 3271; 3274) and later his successor, Nero (*IG* 2.2.3277–78).

¹⁹⁰⁶ Gill, “Achaia,” 444–45.

¹⁹⁰⁷ See McRay, *Archaeology*, 302–5. The Greek market contained temples of Hephaistos and Ares, the massive Stoa of Attalos, and the Odeion.

¹⁹⁰⁸ See R. E. Wycherley, “St. Paul at Athens,” *JTS* 19 (2, 1968): 619–21; cf. Pausanias 1.19.2; 1.24.3; description in Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 23.13–19; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.19.14–15.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Many Jews lived in or near Athens. See Philo, *Embassy* 281–82; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 158–62; Stern, “Diaspora,” 158.

¹⁹¹⁰ Haenchen, *Acts*, 517 (citing 2:12–13; 14:4; 23:6; 28:24); J. H. Neyrey, “Acts 17, Epicureans, and Theodicy: A Study in Stereotypes,” pages 118–34 in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. D. L. Balch et al.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 121.

¹⁹¹¹ So M. L. Soards, “The Historical and Cultural Setting of Luke-Acts,” pages 33–47 in Richard, *New Views*, 45; G. W. Hansen, “The Preaching and Defence of Paul,” pages 295–324 in Marshall and Peterson, *Witness*, 311–13; N. C. Croy, “Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection (Acts 17:18, 32),” *NovT* 39 (1, 1997): 21–39. Epicureans rejected local ones as well as foreign ones.

¹⁹¹² See Neyrey, “Epicureans and Theodicy,” 121; for more nuance, see Schnabel, *Missionary*, 171–78.

Epicureans), so Luke's audience would appreciate the connections.¹⁹¹³ When pagans later lumped Christians with Epicureans (for denying traditional deities), Christian apologists distinguished Christians from Epicureans still more forcefully.¹⁹¹⁴

A Closer Look: Epicureans and Stoics

Many philosophic options existed,¹⁹¹⁵ the most prominent being Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics (Aristotle's school), and Platonists,¹⁹¹⁶ with Stoics and Epicureans as stereotypical opposites¹⁹¹⁷ still remaining dominant in the first-century northern Mediterranean world.¹⁹¹⁸

Epicureanism focused on remembering and imitating its founder more than other schools normally did.¹⁹¹⁹ By this period, Epicurean influence prevailed only among some of the elite. Skeptical and empirically fairly reductionist in his ethics, Epicurus claimed that nature taught an emphasis on pleasure and pain (Cicero, *Fin.* 1.7.23), with pleasure as the chief good and pain as the chief evil (Cicero, *Fin.* 1.9.29). By "pleasure," he meant not drinking parties and sex but tranquility and absence of pain.¹⁹²⁰ He insisted on virtue as necessary for genuine happiness (Cicero, *Fin.* 1.18.57–58).¹⁹²¹

¹⁹¹³ Neyrey, "Epicureans and Theodicy," 121–22. Paul's letters reflect far more Stoic than Epicurean influence; see, e.g., F. G. Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (London: Routledge, 1998), 267–86.

¹⁹¹⁴ L. C. A. Alexander, "IPSE DIXIT: Citation of Authority in Paul and in the Jewish Hellenistic Schools," pages 103–27 in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 124.

¹⁹¹⁵ Lucian, *Hermot.* 14–15, 25–27, 29–30. Eclecticism was also growing.

¹⁹¹⁶ Lucian, *Par.* 27; *Hermot.* 16; *Eunuch* 3. Others included Pythagoreans (Lucian, *Fisherman* 43) and Skeptics (*Indictment* 25).

¹⁹¹⁷ Seneca, *Dial.* 8.3.2; Lucian, *Par.* 30; Juvenal, *Sat.* 13.121–22.

¹⁹¹⁸ With, e.g., Klauck, *Context*, 334. Nevertheless, Plato commanded respect over a long period (Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.17.39–40; 1.23.55; Seneca, *Dial.* 7.18.1).

¹⁹¹⁹ In greater detail, see Diogenes Laertius Bk. 10 (for their views on pleasure, Cicero, *Fin.* 1.5.13–1.21.72); J. M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (New York: Scribner's, 1974), 14–74; D. Clay, *Epicurus and Lucretius* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); more succinctly, Klauck, *Context*, 385–400; Keener, "Epicureans," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). On Epicurus and religion, see D. Obbink, "The Atheism of Epicurus," *GRBS* 30 (1989): 187–223.

¹⁹²⁰ Diogenes Laertius 10.131–32; cf. also 10.144.17; Cicero, *Fin.* 1.11.37. Epicurus in fact advocated a simple, spartan life (Diogenes Laertius 10.1.11). Epicurus viewed sex as potentially harmful, and he generally discouraged marriage; see T. Brennan, "Epicurus on Sex, Marriage, and Children," *CP* 91 (4, 1996): 346–52.

¹⁹²¹ Though he advocated pursuing virtues not for their own sake but because they yielded pleasure (Diogenes Laertius 10.138). See R. Woolf, "What Kind of Hedonist Was Epicurus?" *Phronesis* 49 (4, 2004): 302–22.

Epicureanism became widely known for valuing pleasure as the chief good¹⁹²² – a value sometimes abused¹⁹²³ and often critiqued,¹⁹²⁴ not least by Stoics.¹⁹²⁵ Although the goal of most Greek thinkers, including Stoics, was “happiness,” Epicurus’s language led to misunderstanding (Cicero, *Fin.* 2.4.11–2.6.18).

Epicurus accepted as gods only those known directly through sensation, not the gods of the myths.¹⁹²⁶ Common beliefs about deities were impious;¹⁹²⁷ true divinity was too transcendent (Lucretius, *Nat.* 5.146–55) to be involved with nature (*Nat.* 2.1090–1104) or human affairs.¹⁹²⁸ They denied deities’ involvement with creation and denied divine design in nature;¹⁹²⁹ infinite matter simply accidentally collected into the known world.¹⁹³⁰ Many thus charged them with impiety,¹⁹³¹ and with a doctrine that could lead to such.¹⁹³²

Without traditional religion, there was no reason to fear death.¹⁹³³ Because humans are exclusively material, they perish at death with no afterlife,¹⁹³⁴ and therefore no regret of their nonexistence.¹⁹³⁵ Because fear of death obliterates

¹⁹²² Lucian, *Indictment* 20–21; *Slip* 6. See further Long, *Philosophy*, 61–69; Klauck, *Context*, 395–98.

¹⁹²³ Seneca, *Dial.* 7.12.4; 7.13.1–2; Lucian, *Phil. Sale* 19.

¹⁹²⁴ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.21.50; Macrobius, *Sat.* 2.1.8; Plutarch, *Pleas. L.* 3, *Mor.* 1087D; 13, *Mor.* 1095C; Aulus Gellius 9.5; Maximus of Tyre 30–33; Lucian, *Hermot.* 16.

¹⁹²⁵ Cicero, *Fin.* Bk. 2; Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.10a, p. 58.8–11.

¹⁹²⁶ E.g., Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 123–24 (Grant, *Religions*, 157); Lucretius, *Nat.* 1.62–79; Proclus, *Poet.* 6.1, K119.2–3. Nevertheless, an Epicurean could appeal to myths for illustrations (Philodemus, *Death* 3.32–33; 23.13–14).

¹⁹²⁷ Lucretius, *Nat.* 1.80–101; Diogenes Laertius 10.123–24.

¹⁹²⁸ Lucretius, *Nat.* 2.646–51; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 3.218; Lucian, *Indictment* 2.

¹⁹²⁹ Lucretius, *Nat.* 2.167–83; 5.156–234; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.9.21–22; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.37.

¹⁹³⁰ Lucretius, *Nat.* 1.958–1115; 5.416–31; for random chance and consequent free (unpredictable) will, see Long, *Philosophy*, 57–61.

¹⁹³¹ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.36–37; cf. one challenge in Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.21.57–1.44.124.

Lucian satirizes such criticisms in *Phil. Sale* 19; *Alex.* 38, 46; *Icar.* 26, 31; *Zeus Rants* 4.

¹⁹³² Cicero, *Pis.* 9.20; 28.68–69.

¹⁹³³ Lucretius, *Nat.* 1.102–6; 3.1–30. In Bk. 3, he supplemented traditional Epicurean arguments by pointing out that death was part of the life cycle (T. O’Keefe, “Lucretius on the Cycle of Life and the Fear of Death,” *Apeiron* 36 [1, 2003]: 43–66); in 3.832–842, 972–975, he provided the Epicurean argument that the afterlife is equivalent to the nonexistence that precedes birth (J. Warren, “Lucretius, Symmetry Arguments, and Fearing Death,” *Phronesis* 46 [4, 2001]: 466–91, comparing Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 125; one might also note Pliny, *Nat.* 7.55.190). On Lucretius, see further P. H. De Lacy, “Lucretius and the History of Epicureanism,” *TAPA* 79 (1948): 12–23; C. J. Classen, “Poetry and Rhetoric in Lucretius,” *TAPA* 99 (1968): 77–118.

¹⁹³⁴ Lucretius, *Nat.* 3.370–95, 417–829; Philodemus, *On Death* 1; 17.3–6; 21.6–11; 28.5–13; 30.15–17.

¹⁹³⁵ See Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* 124; Lucretius, *Nat.* 3.830–977; cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.124–25.

tranquility (Cicero, *Fin.* 1.18.60), Epicureanism's goal was to banish fear of it.¹⁹³⁶ Religion was supposed to provide a social control on immorality,¹⁹³⁷ so Epicureans' denial of afterlife could undermine morality.¹⁹³⁸

Anti-Epicurean sentiments were common,¹⁹³⁹ especially among Stoics.¹⁹⁴⁰ Many allowed that Epicurus himself was a good person,¹⁹⁴¹ while contending that his intellect or his movement had corrupted his teachings.¹⁹⁴² An eclectic first-century Stoic like Seneca could quote Epicurus liberally – especially to wean a reader from Epicurean tendencies and win him to Stoicism.¹⁹⁴³ Josephus claims that God's predictions to Daniel refute Epicurean denial of providence (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.277–78); later rabbis specified Epicureans among the damned (*m. Sanh.* 10:1; *t. Sanh.* 13:5).

Stoicism was the most popular sect in the period,¹⁹⁴⁴ especially among those involved in public affairs.¹⁹⁴⁵ Stoicism's founder, Zeno, hailed from Paul's region, Cilicia, and settled in Athens; Chrysippus and other early Stoics also were from Athens. Romans had little interest in Stoic cosmological speculation, but appreciated contemporary Stoic ethics.¹⁹⁴⁶

In contrast to Epicureans, Stoics associated pleasure with vice (Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 59.1), though joy of spirit was good (59.2).¹⁹⁴⁷ Stoics emphasized enduring pain (Aulus Gellius 12.5). Of the major Greek philosophic schools, only Stoicism retained the gods – though not in conventional, mythical form. Like some other philosophers, they managed to make

¹⁹³⁶ Cicero, *Fin.* 4.5.11; *Nat. d.* 1.20.56; cf. Diogenes Laertius 10.125.

¹⁹³⁷ Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.19; Polybius 6.56.9–15; Proclus, *Poet.* 5, K51.11–14; Wis 2:1–9.

¹⁹³⁸ Plutarch, *Pleas. L.* 23, *Mor.* 1103D; Aulus Gellius 9.5.8.

¹⁹³⁹ E.g., Heraclitus, *Hom. Prob.* 4.2; 79.2–11; Lucian, *Alex.* 25, 38, 44–47; cf. J. Warren, "Pleasure, Plutarch's *Non Posse* and Plato's *Republic*," *ClQ* 61 (1, 2011): 278–93.

¹⁹⁴⁰ E.g., Seneca, *Dial.* 7.13.1; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.20; Lucian, *Carousal* 6; cf. H. Dyson, "Pleasure and the Sapiens: Seneca *De Vita Beata* 11.1," *CP* 105 (3, 2010): 313–18.

¹⁹⁴¹ Cicero, *Fam.* 13.1.2; *Tusc.* 3.20.46.

¹⁹⁴² Cicero, *Fin.* 2.25.80; Seneca, *Dial.* 7.12.4.

¹⁹⁴³ Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 2, 4; 8.7; 9.1; 12.11; 16.7; 17.11; 18.9, 14; 19.10; 20.9; 21.3, 4; 22.5–6, 13–14; 25.4–6; 27.9; 28.9–10; 52.3; *Dial.* 2.15.4.

¹⁹⁴⁴ See, e.g., Lucian, *Hermot.* 16; *Fisherman* 51. Middle Platonism absorbed many Stoic elements (J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977], 252). On Stoicism, see Long, *Philosophy*, 109–209; T. Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005); sources surveyed in C. Gill, "Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy," *Phronesis* 53 (3, 2008): 303–13.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.2, 5, 20; *Hist.* 4.10, 40; Lucian, *Phil. Sale* 20.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 179.

¹⁹⁴⁷ E.g., Seneca, *Dial.* 7.11.1; Musonius Rufus 1, p. 32.22; 3, p. 40.17; 17, p. 108.12, 16, 25–27; 17, p. 110.21–23; 12, p. 86.29; 18B, p. 118.8–9; frg. 51, p. 144.8–9; for definitions, see Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.5a, pp. 10–11.12–13; 2.7.10, pp. 56–57.10, 14–16; 2.7.10b, pp. 58–59.29–31, 36; 2.7.10b, pp. 60–61.1–2; 2.7.10c, pp. 60–61.18.

Homer and other myths compatible with their ideals by allegorizing them.¹⁹⁴⁸ Against Epicureans, Stoics emphasized fate and determinism;¹⁹⁴⁹ although by this period they spoke of “God,” elements of their original pantheism (see comment on Acts 17:28) sometimes persisted (Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 2.45.1–2). The cosmos would dissolve into primeval fire (e.g., Seneca, *Ben.* 4.8.1).

Stoic apologetic for their theology began by arguing that gods exist; then defining gods’ character; then demonstrating (against Epicureans) that they govern the world; and concluding that they care for humanity’s needs (Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.4). This basic outline of argument may have been well enough known to supply a model for Paul’s Areopagus speech.¹⁹⁵⁰

Still, pure Stoicism also had its detractors;¹⁹⁵¹ some people even charged them with “inhumanity.”¹⁹⁵² Likewise, for all their use of Stoic categories and correspondences with Stoic ethics, Christians differed with much Stoic theology and cosmology. ****

Paul’s hearers, perhaps especially the Epicureans, accuse him of being a *babbler* (17:18).¹⁹⁵³ Interrupting and ridiculing speakers was a common practice,¹⁹⁵⁴ often as a way to display one’s wit;¹⁹⁵⁵ they could also use insulting labels such as a silly prater (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 47.8) or a nightingale (47.16). Critics labeled Paul insane (Acts 26:24), a fool (1 Cor 4:10), or even an impostor (2 Cor 6:8). The term translated *babbler*¹⁹⁵⁶ originally referred to a bird pecking up seeds, figuratively applied to worthless people gathering scraps in the market, hence eventually gossips. More relevant here, some used it for hearers who collected and disseminated scraps of others’ opinions, trying to appear like philosophers merely

¹⁹⁴⁸ E.g., Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.28.70; Cornutus, *Greek Theology* 17–20; Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 2.44.1–2.45.1.

¹⁹⁴⁹ E.g., Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.7.35; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.149.

¹⁹⁵⁰ See Hansen, “Preaching,” 312; B. W. Winter, “In Public and in Private: Early Christians and Religious Pluralism,” pages 125–48 in *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism* (ed. A. D. Clarke and B. W. Winter; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 136.

¹⁹⁵¹ Cicero, *Nat. d.* Bk. 3; Plutarch, *Stoic Cont.*, *Mor.* 1033A–1057C; *St. Poets*, *Mor.* 1057C–1058D; *Comm. Conc.*, *Mor.* 1058E–1086B; Lucian, *Phil. Sale* 20–22.

¹⁹⁵² T. H. Irwin, “Stoic Inhumanity,” pages 219–41 in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen; Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1998), 219.

¹⁹⁵³ In Greek, what he “wants” to say uses the rarer optative, sounding more cultured and here condescending.

¹⁹⁵⁴ See Plutarch, *Demosth.* 6.3; 7.1; 8.5.

¹⁹⁵⁵ See, e.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 4.26.73, one ridiculing the Stoics.

¹⁹⁵⁶ Used derisively in Philo, *Embassy* 203 but associated often with Athenian insults.

by appropriating their jargon secondhand. For them, Paul's thought fails to rise above the general rabble;¹⁹⁵⁷ he offers little new (cf. Acts 17:21).

But when Paul *does* offer something new, it apparently confuses the Stoics, who allowed for deities but apparently think that Paul refers to two gods!¹⁹⁵⁸ Many readers have long argued that these respected philosophers misunderstand Paul as preaching "foreign deities" (plural) because he is preaching "Jesus" and "Anastasis," "Resurrection" (Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 38), perhaps as deified personifications of "healing" and "restoration."¹⁹⁵⁹ Since worshipers often linked male deities with female consorts in this period, they may have supposed Anastasis to be Jesus's divine consort (like the foreign deities Osiris and Isis);¹⁹⁶⁰ Anastasia was a common woman's name.¹⁹⁶¹ These elite hearers misunderstand Paul from their own world-view (cf. 14:11–12 and 28:6) and so provide Luke's audience some comic relief.¹⁹⁶²

Paul could not easily escape the charge of being "foreign";¹⁹⁶³ Athenians were quick to detect any divergence from the "pure" Attic accent in a speaker.¹⁹⁶⁴ They expected anyone who addressed them to be able to do so in "Athenian," i.e., Attic, speech.¹⁹⁶⁵ Foreigners (cf. 16:20–21) had long been second-class in Athens, especially in its earlier heyday. They might deem Paul almost a "barbarian" from an insufficiently hellenized part of Asia

¹⁹⁵⁷ Cf. also the character type of the incessant talker (Theophrastus, *Char.* 7.5–9).

¹⁹⁵⁸ The informed audience will catch the irony: those who sought novelties (17:21) accused Paul of peddling them (17:19; Rowe, *World*, 32–33).

¹⁹⁵⁹ Hansen, "Preaching," 311. Personification of virtues and ideals was common (e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.10; 77/78.33). Alternatively, the plural could be simply a generalizing plural, on the assumption of an accompanying pantheon (K. L. McKay, "Foreign Gods Identified in Acts 17:18?" *TynBul* 45 [1994]: 411–12). Or, if Paul had already spoken of an "unknown deity" (17:23), the plurality of altars so labeled could have also contributed to the confusion.

¹⁹⁶⁰ So Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 38.1 (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 601, 605).

¹⁹⁶¹ E.g., *CII* 1:234–35, §298; 1:378, §516; 1:424, §576; 1:597, §732.

¹⁹⁶² Witty insults were common (e.g., Cicero, *Brut.* 43.158; 93.322; *Or. Brut.*, 40.138–139; *Fam.* 7.32.1; 9.25.2), and monotheists often ridiculed paganism (e.g., Ps 115:4–8; 135:15–18; Isa 46:6–7; Wis 13:10–14.4). Misunderstandings can offer comic relief, as in Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 751–52.

¹⁹⁶³ *Sounds rather strange* in 17:20 also reflects the verb *xenizô*, evoking *foreign* (*xenos*) in 17:18; even *foreigners* (*xenoi*) might be interested (17:21).

¹⁹⁶⁴ See Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.31.624; cf. 1.4, 7; 6.36; *Vit. Apoll.* 8.6; Lucian, *Soph.* 6. Even before the Second Sophistic, Josephus apologizes for falling short of purist Greek standards (*Ant.* 20.263–64).

¹⁹⁶⁵ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37.26 (Favorinus), though this text reflects the Second Sophistic after Paul's day. Excessive Atticizing was tasteless (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.17).

(though many did envision Jews as a nation of philosophers).¹⁹⁶⁶ For Jews, Paul is too favorable to Greeks (21:28); to Greeks, he introduces foreign gods (17:18–19); to Romans, he is too Jewish (16:20–21). Yet Luke’s ideal audience understands that Paul is a faithful Jew (18:18; 21:24, 26), conversant in Greek wisdom (17:22–31), and a Roman citizen (16:37).

While the Athenians appreciated what was “new” (17:21), some believed that proclaiming *foreign divinities* (17:18) had traditionally warranted death there;¹⁹⁶⁷ impiety,¹⁹⁶⁸ such as sacrilege against the (Eleusinian) Mysteries, could lead to trial.¹⁹⁶⁹ Still, as the altars to unknown deities show (17:23), Athenians like everyone else had long been sensitive to the danger of neglecting a “new god.”¹⁹⁷⁰ Indeed, Athenians were noted for their hospitality to foreign culture and foreign cultic activities to the extent that they were sometimes even ridiculed for it (Strabo 10.3.18).

For Luke’s literary purposes, however, the charge evokes that against Socrates, of introducing “new” divinities.¹⁹⁷¹ Later writers continued to note this charge and its absurdity,¹⁹⁷² insisting that it discredited the Athenians instead.¹⁹⁷³ Socrates was by now the paradigmatic sage,¹⁹⁷⁴ regularly cited in this period by Stoics.¹⁹⁷⁵ Later speakers sometimes

¹⁹⁶⁶ M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), 1:255–61; M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–84), 1:8–11, 46, 50, 93–96, 131–33; A. Bosch-Veciana, “La ‘filosofía’ del judaisme alexandri com a ‘manera de viure,’” *RCT* 34 (2, 2009): 503–21.

¹⁹⁶⁷ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.267.

¹⁹⁶⁸ See, e.g., Alciphron, *Court.* 3 (Bacchis to Hypereides), 1.30, ¶1; 4 (Bacchis to Phrynê), 1.31, ¶1; Lucian, *Demonax* 11; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 13.590d.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Xenophon, *Hell.* 1.4.14; Demosthenes, *Mid.* 175; Ps.-Plutarch, *Ten Orators*, 2. *Andocides*, *Mor.* 834CD; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.266. Athens banished Protagoras for agnosticism (Valerius Maximus 1.1. ext. 7; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.10.494).

¹⁹⁷⁰ Even in Socrates’s era; Euripides, *Bacch.* 219–20.

¹⁹⁷¹ Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.1; Plato, *Apol.* 24B; *Euthyphro* 3B; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 43.9; Hermogenes, *Method* 9.424; Philostratus, *V.A.* 7.11. Like Paul, Socrates denies the charge (Plato, *Apol.* 35D). Aristophanes, *Clouds* 226–27, 366–67, 818–27, 1470–77, 1506–9 depicts Socrates as irreligious (Socrates reportedly made light of Aristophanes’s depiction; Musonius Rufus 10, p. 78.12–14).

¹⁹⁷² Valerius Maximus 1.1. ext. 7; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 104.28; Eunapius, *Lives* 464.

¹⁹⁷³ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.9; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.123; Maximus of Tyre 3.1–8; Eunapius, *Lives* 462; *Greek Anth.* 7.96.

¹⁹⁷⁴ E.g., Lucian, *Demonax* 5; see D. L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (SBLDS 1; Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972), 30–42; C. B. R. Pelling, “Plutarch’s Socrates,” *Herm* 179 (2005): 105–39.

¹⁹⁷⁵ E.g., Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 104.27; *Dial.* 4.7.1; 7.25.4; *Ben.* 5.4.3; 5.6.2–7; 5.7.5; 7.8.2; Musonius Rufus 10, p. 78.12–14; 18B, p. 118.16–18; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.2.36. Among Cynics, see Ps.-Crates, *Ep.* 35; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 28.

compared mockery of themselves or their heroes with that against Socrates,¹⁹⁷⁶ thereby turning the accusations to their favor. Luke thus depicts Paul as continuing the true philosophic tradition.¹⁹⁷⁷ Indeed, far from preaching foreign deities (17:18), Paul summons his hearers to turn from false gods to the true God, who is not far from any of them (17:27).

Luke often uses the term translated *brought* (17:19) for trials or condemnations, here perhaps to echo Socrates, who, condemned by the Areopagus, became the model martyr.¹⁹⁷⁸ Although Roman law would not allow Paul to be executed like Socrates, the allusion offers some suspense in view of preceding civic hearings and persecutions (16:22–23; 17:5–8, 13).

Dialoguing with whomever Paul finds in the marketplace (17:17) fits the “university” climate of Athens, but once Paul began to appear as a potentially rival public speaker (17:18), he might need to be accredited by the Areopagus (17:19). Athens drew more speakers than it could accommodate, like Hollywood draws actors or Nashville singers.¹⁹⁷⁹ A deeper problem may be that preaching “foreign deities” (17:18) may require him to secure approval from the chief Athenian court for public teaching in Athens.

Although the Areopagus council (17:19) originally met on the hill of that name, the mention of an “Areopagite” (17:34) confirms that Luke refers to the council, not the location.¹⁹⁸⁰ In this period the council probably met in the Stoa Basileios (the Royal Colonnade), just off the Agora; Paul’s questioners would not have to bring him far.¹⁹⁸¹ The Areopagus included about a hundred members¹⁹⁸² (making Luke’s report of a small number of adherents among the hearers in 17:34 less implausible than Luke’s critics

¹⁹⁷⁶ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 43.9–10; Lucian, *Dem.* 5, 11; Philostratus, *V.A.* 7.11–13; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37.32 (Favorinus); Christians in Justin, 2 *Apol.* 10.

¹⁹⁷⁷ See especially D. L. Balch, “The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius against Later Stoics and the Epicureans,” pages 52–79 in Balch, ed., *Greeks, Romans, and Christians*, esp. 79.

¹⁹⁷⁸ Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.8.2; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.29.16–18; 2.2.8–9; 2.6.26; 3.18.4; 4.1.123, 162–69; 4.4.21; probably the template for Seneca’s death in Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.62–64 (and perhaps parodied in Petronius’s; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.19).

¹⁹⁷⁹ In earlier times, those too young to speak wisdom in the marketplace itself might lecture instead in a shop nearby (Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.2.1).

¹⁹⁸⁰ So also most other scholars. Those who stand on the hill today may wonder how large a group could meet there together.

¹⁹⁸¹ Luke’s topography here is realistic (C. J. Hemer, “Paul at Athens: A Topographical Note,” *NTS* 20 (3, 1974): 341–50 [349]).

¹⁹⁸² *NewDocs* 1, §31, p. 82.

suppose). Although a trial court,¹⁹⁸³ the Areopagus was traditionally Athens' aristocratic court, distinct from the body of the people.¹⁹⁸⁴ As a "free city," Athens continued to maintain its own government in the Roman period, and the Areopagus remained its ruling council.¹⁹⁸⁵ By Paul's day, many members were Roman citizens,¹⁹⁸⁶ and all former archons, or Athenian civic officials, apparently belonged to this body.¹⁹⁸⁷

Despite the Socrates allusions, Paul faces no physical danger (see 17:19–21). Luke presents more than curiosity, but not a formal, legal trial; this may be simply a hearing to determine whether he may lecture "officially" in Athens. After a new sophist declaimed in town, his audience would decide whether to accept him as a local teacher of rhetoric, but many competed for such positions, particularly in a university town like Athens.¹⁹⁸⁸ If individuals called attention to a lecturer, the city could evaluate him,¹⁹⁸⁹ especially if a thinker challenged traditional religious views.¹⁹⁹⁰ The Areopagus in this period apparently exercised jurisdiction over the entrance of foreign cults (cf. 17:18).¹⁹⁹¹

The emphasis on Athenians always wishing to hear *something new* (17:21) pervades Luke's characterization of them in this context.¹⁹⁹² Athenian captivity to new ideas (17:21) was a familiar ancient theme.¹⁹⁹³ Addiction to novelty could be a negative trait.¹⁹⁹⁴ When one Athenian

¹⁹⁸³ E.g., Valerius Maximus 8.1. amb. 2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.55; Lucian, *Indictment* 4, 12; *Tim.* 46; Ps.-Lucian, *Affairs* 29. In earlier times, it could try capital cases (Lysias, *Or.* 6.14, §104; 10.11, §117; Aeschines, *Ctes.* 252; Lucian, *Anach.* 19).

¹⁹⁸⁴ Isocrates, *Areopagus*; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 14.4. For their status, see, e.g., Lucian, *Dial. C.* 7 (*Musarium and her Mother* ¶2), 296–97.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Cicero, *Fam.* 13.1.5; *Att.* 5.11; *IG* 2.2.3277 (in Nero's reign); Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 50.2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.55; Apuleius, *Metam.* 10.7; Juvenal, *Sat.* 9.101; Menander Rhetor 2.3, 385.12–13.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Cf. several Areopagites earlier in Cicero, *Balb.* 12.30. In the early second century, only Roman citizens could head philosophic schools in Athens (*CIL* 3.12283; *ILS* 7784; *FIRA* 1.79).

¹⁹⁸⁷ *OCD*³ 152.

¹⁹⁸⁸ B. W. Winter, "Philo and Paul among the Sophists" (PhD dissertation, Macquarrie University, 1989), 149–51; idem, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 36–37.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Ramsay, *Cities*, 229–30.

¹⁹⁹⁰ So the Areopagus in stricter times (Diogenes Laertius 2.116; cf. also 2.101).

¹⁹⁹¹ G. H. R. Horsley, "The Inscriptions of Ephesos and the New Testament," *NovT* 34 (2, 1992): 105–68 (151–52); B. W. Winter, "On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17:18–20," *TynBul* 47 (1, 1996): 71–90.

¹⁹⁹² The uses of *kainos* in 17:19 and 21 are its only two occurrences in Acts.

¹⁹⁹³ Thucydides 3.38.5–7; Demosthenes, *Philip.* 1.10; Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.11.6. Athenians mocked those who repeated themselves too freely (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.8.579).

¹⁹⁹⁴ Maximus of Tyre 36.2; Lucian, *Icar.* 24; *Posts* 26.

critic chided Socrates for repeating themes rather than articulating new ideas, Socrates asked whether his questioner always spelled words differently or achieved different sums from the same addition.¹⁹⁹⁵

Sources from this period often associate curiosity (17:21) with “superstition” (a probable nuance of “religious” in 17:22).¹⁹⁹⁶ Ironically it is not Paul, called a *babbler* in 17:18, who is a dilettante, but his interlocutors.¹⁹⁹⁷ Paul’s philosophic interlocutors identify his “new teaching” (cf. Mark 1:27), which they wish to know in 17:19, with what is *strange* or foreign, which they wish to know in 17:20. Yet their interest is academic, like judges of a contest, rather than that of spiritually convicted seekers (cf. further 17:32).

Luke’s biblical subtext demonstrates that, contrary to charges of newness (17:18–21; 21:28), Paul’s message simply culminates Israel’s indisputably ancient faith. (The Roman world respected customs hallowed by antiquity.) Socrates’s successors insisted that not he, but the Athenians introduced new divinities.¹⁹⁹⁸ Moreover, Paul does not preach “new” (17:19) or “foreign” gods (17:18, 20); he preaches not only a god to whom they have constructed altars (17:23), but the God who created everything (17:26) and is near to his creatures (17:27).

17:22–31: PAUL’S PHILOSOPHIC DISCOURSE

Paul preaches in different ways to synagogue audiences (13:16–47), rural pagans (14:15–17), and cultured members of the urban Greek elite (17:22–31). Adaptation to local color was an essential feature of rhetorical skill;¹⁹⁹⁹ ancient interpreters associated Paul’s adaptability here with the strategy he articulates in 1 Cor 9:19–23.²⁰⁰⁰

Here Paul contextualizes biblical revelation (e.g., Acts 17:24, 26) with more language intelligible to Greek intellectuals.²⁰⁰¹ Most members of the Areopagus were not philosophers, but Luke’s audience would presume

¹⁹⁹⁵ Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.4.6–7. Some complained that Stoicism’s founder Zeno offered only new language for old ideas (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.2.5; 4.8.19; 4.20.56).

¹⁹⁹⁶ See P. Gray, “Athenian Curiosity (Acts 17:21),” *NovT* 47 (2, 2005): 109–16.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Witherington, *Acts*, 517.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Plato, *Apol.* 39CD; Maximus of Tyre 3.8.

¹⁹⁹⁹ See, e.g., Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.24; Diogenes Laertius 2.66; Marshall, *Enmity*, 71–73.

²⁰⁰⁰ M. M. Mitchell, “Pauline Accommodation and ‘Condescension’ (συγκατάβασις): 1 Cor 9:19–23 and the History of Influence,” pages 197–214 in Engberg-Pedersen, *Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, 208, citing Origen, *Comm. in 1 Cor.* 3.43.

²⁰⁰¹ See K. D. Litwak, “Israel’s Prophets Meet Athens’ Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17, 22–31,” *Bib* 85 (2, 2004): 199–216.

them, as members of Athens' elite, to be philosophically literate. Paul's hearers at least *included* Stoics and Epicureans (17:18), who brought him there (17:19). Many gentile thinkers respected providentialist ethical theism²⁰⁰² and allowed that God is both transcendent (17:24–26) and immanent in humanity (17:28–29). From such concepts Paul argues that idols reveal nothing about God and offer no benefit to humans. God's ultimate revelation is not in human artistic representation but in the gospel (17:29–31).²⁰⁰³

Paul had not likely read Greek philosophers, but he could draw on prior hellenistic Jewish apologetic engagement with Greek philosophy,²⁰⁰⁴ indeed, some apologists contended that Greeks borrowed their philosophy from Moses.²⁰⁰⁵ Insofar as evidence remains, Diaspora synagogue homilies may draw on their milieu's philosophic assumptions;²⁰⁰⁶ hellenistic thought impacted even urban Judea.²⁰⁰⁷ Yet few Jewish apologists, even members of the learned elite such as Philo, would have ventured into the public square to convince pagans in open debate. Because the early Christian movement emphasized ethics and lacked cult, many gentile outsiders eventually viewed it as a philosophic school.²⁰⁰⁸ This approach coheres with the earliest trajectory of Jesus's movement, which began as a school of disciples.²⁰⁰⁹

²⁰⁰² Cf. F. G. Downing, "Ethical Pagan Theism and the Speeches in Acts," *NTS* 27 (4, 1981): 544–63.

²⁰⁰³ Among many treatments of the passage, see, e.g., J. J. Kilgallen, "Acts 17, 22b–31 – What Kind of Speech Is This?" *RB* 110 (3, 2003): 417–24; K. O. Sandnes, "Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech," *JSNT* 50 (1993): 13–26.

²⁰⁰⁴ For such material, see, e.g., 4 Macc 1:1; 7:7–9; Wolfson, *Philo*; J. M. Dillon, "Reclaiming the Heritage of Moses: Philo's Confrontation with Greek Philosophy," *SPhiloA* 7 (1995): 108–23; Sterling, *Ancestral Philosophy*, especially 11–32; E. Koskeniemi, "Philo and Greek Poets," *JSJ* 41 (3, 2010): 301–22.

²⁰⁰⁵ Aristobulus frg. 3–4 (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.1–13.13.8); *Let. Aris.* 312–16; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 4.61; *Good Person* 57; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.165; 2.154–56, 257, 281.

²⁰⁰⁶ Siegert, "Homily," 435–37.

²⁰⁰⁷ E.g., S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (2nd ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America Press, 1962); M. Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism and the East* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1978); Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*.

²⁰⁰⁸ R. L. Wilken, "Toward a Social Interpretation of Early Christian Apologetics," *CH* 39 (4, 1970): 437–58; idem, "The Christians as the Romans (and Greeks) Saw Them," pages 100–25 in *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (ed. E. P. Sanders; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 107–10; T. Schmeller, "Gegenwelten: Zum Vergleich zwischen paulinischen Gemeinden und nichtchristlichen Gruppen," *BZ* 47 (2, 2003): 167–85.

²⁰⁰⁹ See E. A. Judge, "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community," *JRH* 1 (3, 1960): 125–37 (137).

Paul's speech includes various elements that would appeal to rhetorically trained ears.²⁰¹⁰ Luke does not present Paul as a pure orator, but he is at least a "competent amateur."²⁰¹¹ Although the speech includes forensic elements appropriate to a hearing, Paul's objectives are deliberative (17:30–31, 34). Fitting ideals, the speech includes a complimentary exordium (17:22 or 17:22–23a), possibly a *narratio* (narrative introduction; 17:23a), a *propositio* (thesis, 17:23b), *probatio* (proofs, 17:24–29), and *peroratio* (17:30–31).²⁰¹²

As in 17:22, Athens was known for its exceptional religious devotion (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.130; Pausanias 1.24.3). It was customary for visiting orators to praise a city's buildings (Menander Rhetor 2.3, 382.15–16), including, in Athens, its splendid temples (Aristides, *Panath. Or.* 21, 161D–162D).

This speech develops the historical core of Paul's Athenian ministry, but to what extent? Considering that Luke rather than Paul authors Acts, the compatibility of the speech's appeal to natural revelation with Rom 1:18–32 carries far more weight than nitpicked differences.²⁰¹³ Paul's agenda here is to invite faith; in Romans 1 it is to indict humanity.

Luke surely lacked access to Paul's full speech, but as an ancient historian he was free to present the substance of the sort of speech he expected Paul to give based on his knowledge of Pauline preaching in such settings. He may also have some more specific information.²⁰¹⁴ For example, the quotations usually assigned to Epimenides and Aratus fit the setting in ways that Luke himself does not highlight – Epimenides related to the unknown gods tradition (17:23) and Aratus was from Cilicia, Paul's region.

²⁰¹⁰ See Satterthwaite, "Acts," 369, summarizing R. Morgenthaler, *Lukas und Quintilian: Rhetorik als Erzählkunst* (Zurich: Gotthelf, 1993), 331–34.

²⁰¹¹ C. Gempf, "Before Paul Arrived in Corinth: The Mission Strategies in 1 Corinthians 2:2 and Acts 17," pages 126–42 in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting* (ed. P. J. Williams et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 132.

²⁰¹² Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 518; Satterthwaite, "Acts," 360; Dormeyer and Galindo, *Apostelgeschichte*, 265.

²⁰¹³ B. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955); F. F. Bruce, "The New Testament and Classical Studies," *NTS* 22 (3, 1976): 229–42; B. E. Shields, "The Areopagus Sermon and Romans 1:18ff: A Study in Creation Theology," *ResQ* 20 (1977): 23–40; C. J. Hemer, "The Speeches of Acts, 2: The Areopagus Address," *TynBul* 40 (1989): 239–59; Porter, *Paul in Acts* (1999), 167–70; Klauck, *Magic*, 94.

²⁰¹⁴ Christian travelers to Macedonia (e.g., Phil 4:15–16; 1 Thess 3:6) would also carry news (e.g., 1 Cor 1:11; Col 4:7–9).

Orators focused significant effort on the exordium, or proem, of a speech.²⁰¹⁵ It should introduce its main points²⁰¹⁶ and invite the audience's favor,²⁰¹⁷ often by flattering them.²⁰¹⁸ Against some, Athens' court expected introductory praise no less than did others.²⁰¹⁹ A good orator should praise what was esteemed among a given people, hence Athenian matters among Athenians and so forth (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.30, 1367b). Both Paul's exordium and his introductory narrative prepare for his dominant theme: Athenians may be religious (17:22), but the "unknown God" (17:23) is revealed not in idols but in Christ (17:29–31).

The term rendered *extremely religious* (17:22) is ambiguous (cf. 25:19); ambiguity was sometimes a deliberate rhetorical strategy.²⁰²⁰ Because it appears in a complimentary exordium and Athenians might expect classical usage, Paul's audience within the narrative will hear it as politely praising their devoutness.²⁰²¹ A speaker new to a city might begin by praising its zealous piety and its beautiful sites.²⁰²²

For Luke's own audience, by contrast, the term can connote superstition,²⁰²³ an oft-condemned trait²⁰²⁴ sometimes associated with Judaism²⁰²⁵ and occasionally even with Athens.²⁰²⁶ Paul offers appropriate opening exordia (24:2–3, 10; 26:2–3) but abhors idols (17:16, 29–30). Speakers currying favor did not begin by affirming Athenians' ignorance, especially of the highest God,²⁰²⁷ yet affirmations of their ignorance frame this speech

²⁰¹⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 17; Cicero, *Brut.* 43.158.

²⁰¹⁶ *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436a.33–39; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.137; especially Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.1, 35.

²⁰¹⁷ E.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436a.33–39; 1436b.17–1438a.2; 36, 1441b.36–1442b.27; Cicero, *De or.* 1.31.143; 2.80; *Inv.* 1.15.20; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.23–24; 4.1.5; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.1.94–95.

²⁰¹⁸ E.g., Aeschines, *Ctes.* 1; Cicero, *Sest.* 1.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 39.1; 41.1.

²⁰¹⁹ Lysias, *Or.* 26.17, §177; Maximus of Tyre 3.7; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.25.535; 2.8.579; 2.9.586.

²⁰²⁰ See R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 81–82.

²⁰²¹ With, e.g., Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 38; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 140; Gaventa, *Acts*, 250; Pervo, *Acts*, 433.

²⁰²² Menander Rhetor 1.3, 362.30–32; 2.3, 382.15–16. In Athens, see Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.5.572. Praising public buildings, including temples, was conventional in urban encomia generally (Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.27).

²⁰²³ Polybius 9.19.1; Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 76.13–14; Plutarch, *R.Q.* 61, *Mor.* 278F; *Alex.* 75.2; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 3.14.

²⁰²⁴ Cf. Theophrastus, *Char.* 16; Plutarch, *Superstition*.

²⁰²⁵ E.g., Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 2.7; cf. Christianity in Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.8–9. Many philosophers viewed traditional religion in general as superstition, though only Epicureans thought it hurt the masses.

²⁰²⁶ Diodorus Siculus 32.12 (Balch, "Areopagus Speech," 74).

²⁰²⁷ Cf. Gempf, "Before Paul Arrived," 141. Skeptics claimed agnosticism (Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 3.218–38), but "knowledge" of deity was a major goal for many thinkers (Seneca, *Ep.*

(17:23, 30). For Jews, ignorance of the true God characterized idolaters (Isa 45:20; Wis 14:18, 22; 1 Thess 4:5).

Given the charge that Paul is a *proclaimer* (*kataggeleus*) of foreign divinities (17:18), Paul must now establish that what *I proclaim* (*kataggellô*; 17:23) is the true creator who, far from being “foreign,” is not far from anyone (17:27). If the Areopagus meets in the Royal Stoa, mythological depictions surround Paul (Pausanias 1.3.1–3).²⁰²⁸ But Paul appeals to a sign of Athens’ religious commitments more relevant for his own message (Acts 17:23).

Numerous ancient sources refer to altars of unknown gods (plural) in Athens.²⁰²⁹ As Jerome notes, Paul’s monotheism requires him to adapt such language for one unknown deity in particular.²⁰³⁰ Some ancient thinkers, who already envisioned a pure, highest God without need of temples or sacrifices, might appreciate this adaptation. Indeed, because Israel’s God had a secret name (see comment on Acts 19:13), many Greeks would regard him as the true “unknown God.”²⁰³¹

One possibly legendary account of the origin of at least some of these altars would have suited Paul’s purposes well. In sixth-century BCE Athens, offerings to all known deities proved ineffective in staying a plague.²⁰³² The Cretan Epimenides ordered that sheep be allowed to wander; where each sheep lay down, sacrifice was offered to the deity associated with that site, thus explaining Attica’s numerous nameless altars (Diogenes Laertius 1.110). That Paul may cite Epimenides in Acts 17:28 may suggest that Luke draws on a larger Pauline memory of Paul’s speech in Athens.

Orators typically posed a political thesis, but Paul’s speech addresses issues more at home among philosophers.²⁰³³ Paul’s argument focuses first

Lucil. 95.48; *Nat. Q.* 1. pref. 13; Plutarch, *Isis* 2, *Mor.* 352A; Keener, *John*, 235–43) and ignorance was a vice (Arius Didymus 2.7.5b12, p. 26.13–14).

²⁰²⁸ He could gesture toward them in 17:23–24, 29; cf. Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 57–62.

²⁰²⁹ Commentators cite, e.g., Pausanias 1.1.4; 5.14.8; Diogenes Laertius 1.110; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 6.3.5; Tertullian, *Nat.* 2.9. Many do allow that one or more altars may have been dedicated to a single deity. “Unknown deities” appear elsewhere in antiquity as well.

²⁰³⁰ Commentators cite Jerome, *Comm. in Ti.* 1.12. Hellenistic Jews sometimes substituted “God” for “gods” or “Zeus” when quoting pagan texts (Klauck, *Magic*, 82; Talbert, *Acts*, 153). Sometimes, though, they identified them more fully (*Let. Aris.* 16; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 2.165).

²⁰³¹ Gentiles could designate supreme deity as simply “God” (e.g., Plutarch, *Isis* 1, *Mor.* 351DE; *T.-T.* 8.2.4, *Mor.* 720A).

²⁰³² For plagues as divine judgments, cf., e.g., Justin, *Epit.* 16.3.4; 18.6.11–12; 20.2.5; 32.3.9–11.

²⁰³³ See Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 11 (Thesis), 25.

on the nature of the deity (17:24–26), then moves to epistemology of the divine (17:27–29) in line with his thesis (17:23). He establishes God's transcendence (17:24–25), laying the groundwork for his attack on idolatry, and God's immanence (17:27–28), showing that God has already revealed himself in humanity, undercutting the need for idols.

Even pagan poets could affirm that the supreme God ruled land, sea, and sky (Horace, *Ode* 1.12.13–18; 3.45–48). Apart from the Epicureans, few ancient thinkers rejected the argument for deity from design in nature (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.28–37; cf. Diodorus Siculus 12.20.2). Stoics pointed out that one did not need statues to learn of Zeus; his works in creation and especially in humanity revealed his character (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.6.23–25; 1.16.8). Thus Epictetus argues for the necessity of a cause (*Diatr.* 1.6.3–6), then points out that we regularly prove from an object's structure that it was humanly designed rather than random (*Diatr.* 1.6.7); human intellect itself reveals a superhuman designer (1.6.10).²⁰³⁴ (Philosophers commonly reasoned prescriptively from the order of nature.)

Hellenistic Jewish apologetics seems to have borrowed and adapted this argument long before Paul. For example, the *Letter of Aristeas* contends that God's power is manifest in everything (131–32), especially the human body (156–57). Philo likewise draws on Stoic arguments for God's existence.²⁰³⁵ Wisdom of Solomon's natural theology reflects Greek tradition.²⁰³⁶

Yet Paul follows biblical precedent. He begins with creation (Acts 17:24; Gen 1:1–2:4), turns to life and breath (Acts 17:25; Gen 2:7), creation from one person (Acts 17:26; Gen 1:26–27; 2:7), the settlement of peoples (Gen 10:1–32); and so forth.

Establishing a new cult in Athens (cf. 17:18) required purchasing property and building a temple, demanding approval from the magistrates.²⁰³⁷ But Paul explains that his God does not dwell in human temples or require human offerings (17:24–25).²⁰³⁸ Though even Stoics now sanctioned temples, their more radical predecessors dismissed them as unworthy of

²⁰³⁴ Cf. earlier Cicero, *Parad.* 14; *Leg.* 1.5.16; 1.8.25.

²⁰³⁵ Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:75–83.

²⁰³⁶ See J. J. Collins, "Natural Theology and Biblical Tradition: The Case of Hellenistic Judaism," *CBQ* 60 (1, 1998): 1–15.

²⁰³⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, 727, citing S. D. Lambert, "Athenian State Laws and Decrees, 352/1–322/1: II Religious Regulations," *ZPE* 154 (2005): 125–59 (153).

²⁰³⁸ Schnabel, *Missionary*, 102–3, and Witherington, *Acts*, 519, following especially Winter, "Introducing Gods," 84–87. For indwelling of deity in philosophic thought, see, e.g., Keener, *John*, 2:933–34; esp. P. N. Richardson, *Temple of the Living God* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 42–120.

gods (Plutarch, *Stoic Cont.* 6, *Mor.* 1034BC),²⁰³⁹ and some thinkers, especially Epicureans,²⁰⁴⁰ continued to question the need for them.²⁰⁴¹ The unstated Christian source for the idea, of course, is Scripture (Isa 66:1–2 in Acts 7:48–49; cf. Mark 14:58; 2 Cor 5:1; Heb 9:11, 24).

God is not *served by human hands* (17:25a), obviating the *shrines made by human hands* in 17:24. God does not depend on sacrifices (Ps 50:8–13; Isa 1:11–15; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21–24), as some gentiles also recognized.²⁰⁴² That God lacks nothing (17:25a) was a familiar concept both among gentiles and among Greek-speaking Jewish intellectuals;²⁰⁴³ God was completely self-sufficient.²⁰⁴⁴ Some even envisioned God as therefore impassible, unmoved, and unaffected by the world,²⁰⁴⁵ but his self-sufficiency need not make him impassible²⁰⁴⁶ or beyond *accepting* worship.²⁰⁴⁷ For some thinkers, though, it obviated sacrifices.²⁰⁴⁸

While Epicureans would have agreed with 17:25a, they rejected divine providence as articulated by Stoics and in 17:25b–26.²⁰⁴⁹ The threefold gift in 17:25, which presupposes Scripture (Gen 1:26–29; 2:7; cf. Isa 42:5; Wis 15:11) might anticipate the threefold expression of dependence in the quotation in 17:28, which begins with the same opening element (“live”).

The speech quickly moves from the creation of the world to the creation of humanity (17:26). Rhetorically, 17:26 opens with five of seven words beginning with a vowel (four of them *epsilon*).²⁰⁵⁰ Undercutting ideas such

²⁰³⁹ See Diogenes Laertius 7.32–34; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics*, 75; Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 461.

²⁰⁴⁰ Lucian, *Z. Rants* 44; Schnabel, *Missionary*, 173.

²⁰⁴¹ Heraclitus, *Ep.* 4; Lucian, *Sacr.* 11; *Demonax* 27; Porphyry, *Marc.* 11.192–98.

²⁰⁴² E.g., *Pyth. Sent.* 15, 20; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 95.48; *Nat. Q.* 4.6.2–3; 4.7.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 13.35; Lucian, *Dem.* 11. Pythagoreans rejected all sacrifices involving animal blood (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.1, 31–32; 4.11; 5.25; 8.7; *Ep. Apoll.* 27; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.22).

²⁰⁴³ See, e.g., 3 Macc 2:9; Philo, *Unchangeable* 56; esp. Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 43–44; R. Marcus, “Divine Names and Attributes in Hellenistic Jewish Literature,” *PAAJR* 3 (1931–32): 43–120 (55; cf. 47–48).

²⁰⁴⁴ *Pyth. Sent.* 25; Plutarch, *Isis* 75; *Mor.* 381B; *Let. Aris.* 211; Philo, *Creation* 100; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.111; *Ag. Ap.* 2.190; cf. “self-begotten” (*Sib. Or.* 1.20; 3.12) and “unbegotten” (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.167).

²⁰⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Heavens* 1.9, 279a.11–b.3; Cicero, *Pis.* 25.59; Philo, *Creation* 100.

²⁰⁴⁶ Musonius Rufus 17, p. 108.14–15; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.14.11; Iamblichus, *Myist.* 1.12, 15; 5.26; *Let. Aris.* 211.

²⁰⁴⁷ Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.4.10; 2 Macc 14:35; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.111.

²⁰⁴⁸ Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 95.48; Plutarch, *Stoic Cont.* 6, *Mor.* 1034C.

²⁰⁴⁹ Neyrey, “Epicureans and Theodicy,” 123–25.

²⁰⁵⁰ The notable exception, beginning with *pi*, prepares for three words beginning with that sound (and several other recurrences of it, for a total of eight uses of the sound in the beginning and middle of the verse).

as humans springing directly from rocks of mother earth,²⁰⁵¹ Paul affirms humanity's common ancestor, which Luke's audience would envision as Adam (cf. Luke 3:38; Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:22, 45).²⁰⁵² Common ancestry or source puts all people on the same level,²⁰⁵³ important for Luke's mission theme. For people *to inhabit the whole earth* evokes Gen 1:28; 9:1; if God arranged this, how could he *live in* (the same Greek term) mere human houses (17:24)?

The *times* and *boundaries* that God established no doubt include those in nature (14:17),²⁰⁵⁴ but this context suggests even more here God's sovereignty in creating *boundaries* for peoples (Gen 10:5, 10–12, 18–20, 30–32; Deut 32:8)²⁰⁵⁵ and arranging seasons of history (Acts 1:7; 3:20; Luke 21:24).²⁰⁵⁶ Luke's term for *allotted* here (*horizō*) prepares for God appointing (also using *horizō*) in 17:31: the sovereign God who determines times and nations has the right to appoint Jesus as judge of humanity (17:31).

Though unrecognized (17:29–30), God has never been far, as evidenced by his image in humanity (17:27). Divine providence was especially evident in humanity.²⁰⁵⁷ Many believed that knowledge about the deity was innate in humans;²⁰⁵⁸ thus all peoples shared some conception of deities.²⁰⁵⁹ But *grope* (17:27) is hardly a positive image, often connoting someone blind or stumbling in darkness.²⁰⁶⁰

To bolster his case about humans being close to God as his children, Paul quotes from a familiar Greek poem, since educated speakers were expected to offer classical quotations among their proofs. Some of these

²⁰⁵¹ Pindar, *Nemean* 6.1–2; Apollodorus, *Bib.* 1.7.2; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.393–94, 400–15; Statius, *Theb.* 8.305. In myth, Athenians sprang from Attic soil (Isocrates, *Paneg.* 24; Justin, *Epit.* 2.6.4; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 64.12; Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 3).

²⁰⁵² See, e.g., Gen 2–3; Tob 8:6; Sir 40:1; 49:16; CD 10.8; *Jub.* 3:1–33; 1 *En.* 37:1; 4 *Ezra* 3:5–26; 6:54–56; 7:11, 70; 2 *Bar.* 4:3; 17:2; 23:4; *Sipra Behuqotai* pq. 3.263.1.9.

²⁰⁵³ See Cicero, *Off.* 3.6.28; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 44.1–2; 95.52; *m. Sanh.* 4.5; Rom 5:12–21.

²⁰⁵⁴ Gen 1:4, 7, 14; Ps 74:16–17; 104:9; Prov 8:29; Jer 5:22; Wis 7:17–19; 4 *Ezra* 4:19. Polytheists believed that deities divided the cosmos (Pindar, *Olympian* 7.55–56; Lucian, *Dance* 37).

²⁰⁵⁵ Cf. Gen 11:9, 31; Sir 36:11; 1QM 10.14; *Jub.* 8:10–11; 9:14; *Sipre Deut.* 311.1.2. The closest LXX cognate to Luke's *allotted* applies to peoples in the vast majority of cases (e.g., Gen 10:19).

²⁰⁵⁶ Cf. allotted periods for different kingdoms (Dan 2:21, 37–45; 8:19–26; 11:2–45; *Sib. Or.* 8.6–11; 2 *Bar.* 39:5–7; 4 *Ezra* 12:11; *Sipre Deut.* 317.4.2) and the apocalyptic notion of distinct ages, e.g., 4 *Ezra* 7:50; 8:1; *t. Ta'an.* 3:14; *Sipre Num.* 115.5.7; *Sipre Deut.* 29.2.3.

²⁰⁵⁷ For the human body and nature, see Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.54.133–2.58.146; for the human mind, see 2.59.147–2.61.153; cf. 2.61.154–2.67.168.

²⁰⁵⁸ E.g., Cicero, *Inv.* 2.22.65; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.27–32.

²⁰⁵⁹ Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.13.30; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 117.6 (LCL 3:341).

²⁰⁶⁰ E.g., Gen 27:21–22; Deut 28:29; Judg 16:26; Job 5:13–14; 12:25; Isa 59:10; Philo, *Heir* 250; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.231; the idea in CD 1.9; Wis 13:6–9; Lucretius, *Nat.* 2.54.

quotations were available through anthologies.²⁰⁶¹ Although uncertainty remains, in 17:28 Paul's first line (*In him we live and move and have our being*) probably was already attributed to the sixth-century BCE Cretan poet Epimenides;²⁰⁶² the second line resembles a line in the Stoic Cleanthes,²⁰⁶³ but is closer to the Cilician poet Aratus.²⁰⁶⁴ The first line could sound like pantheism, affirmed in varying degrees by many Stoics,²⁰⁶⁵ especially earlier.²⁰⁶⁶

By contrast, even the most similar Jewish language rejected actual equation of God with his creation,²⁰⁶⁷ and context does not permit its inference here (esp. 17:29). Speakers could reapply texts to points that were merely analogous in some measure.²⁰⁶⁸

Paul's point is that God is near humans, because they are his children (17:28). Like Jews, Greeks often called the supreme deity Father.²⁰⁶⁹ Although God was father of his people in a special way,²⁰⁷⁰ Diaspora Jews also acknowledged him as father of humanity by virtue of creation, as here (and Luke 3:38).²⁰⁷¹

²⁰⁶¹ Cf. one of Paul's quotations also in Aristobulus frg. 4 (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.6–7; R. M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986], 51).

²⁰⁶² The poem, though extant today first in the Syriac father Isho'dad of Merv (c. 850 CE), is clearly pagan; its current form is not from Epimenides (R. Renehan, "Classical Greek Quotations in the New Testament," pages 17–46 in *The Heritage of the Early Church* [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973], 38–39), but its substance was *probably* attributed to him by Paul's day. Tit 1:12 quotes from the same poem.

²⁰⁶³ Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 4, from a work widely cited in the first century.

²⁰⁶⁴ Aratus, *Phaen.* 5; for his pantheistic tendencies, cf. *Phaen.* 2–4. Aratus was in Athens with Cleanthes and the lines may reflect the same influence (Renehan, "Quotations," 40); but Aratus's wording is closer and his context fits the blending of quotations here. Before Paul, the Jewish apologist Aristobulus quoted a section of *Phaenomena* (frg. 4.6–7).

²⁰⁶⁵ See Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.7.19–20; Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 1. pref. 13; *Dial.* 7.8.4; *Ep. Lucil.* 95.52; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.6.23–24; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.134; 7.1.148; cf. Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 3.3–9. Humans participated in God in a special way (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.8.10–11).

²⁰⁶⁶ Epicureans (Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.10.24; 1.13.34) and others (Lucian, *Hermot.* 81) sometimes mocked it.

²⁰⁶⁷ Sir 43:27–28; Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 1.44; 1 Cor 15:28.

²⁰⁶⁸ E.g., Seneca, *Suas.* 3.5–7; 4.4–5; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 4.17.130.

²⁰⁶⁹ For a survey of material, too vast for a footnote, see Keener, *John*, 401–2, 877–79; esp. D. G. Chen, *God as Father in Luke-Acts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006). Among Stoics, see, e.g., Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 9.1–2; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 110.10; Musonius Rufus 8, p. 64.14; 16, p. 104.30.

²⁰⁷⁰ E.g., *Jub.* 1:25, 28; Tob 13:4; 3 Macc 5:7; *Sipra Qedoshim* pq. 9.207.2.13; *Behuqotai* pq. 8.269.2.15; see further Chen, *Father*, 145–229.

²⁰⁷¹ E.g., Philo passim (e.g., *Spec. Laws* 2.165; *Decal.* 32); *Sib. Or.* 3.278, 296, 604, 726.

As God's children (Acts 17:28), humans are created in his image (cf. Gen 5:1–3),²⁰⁷² unlike mere statue images (Acts 17:29). People *live and move* (17:28), unlike idols (17:29), which do *not* “live” (Wis 15:17) or “move” (e.g., Isa 46:7). If people are God's offspring (hence his workmanship), God²⁰⁷³ cannot be people's workmanship, even with gold or silver (Ps 115:4–8; 135:15–18; Isa 2:20; 31:7; 46:5–7; Ezek 16:17; Hos 8:4).²⁰⁷⁴

Although most Greek thinkers tolerated deity-images, many protested that such forms were merely reminders, not heavenly deities themselves.²⁰⁷⁵ Earlier Stoics even opposed such images.²⁰⁷⁶ Paul goes further, however, demanding repentance (Acts 17:30; cf. 1 Thess 1:9).²⁰⁷⁷ Having established as much rapport as possible,²⁰⁷⁸ Paul now challenges his hearers. Although Greeks knew of conversion to philosophy,²⁰⁷⁹ moral repentance was a more Jewish notion.

Ignorance about God was less culpable than deliberate distortions about him (cf. Acts 3:17), but given God's self-revelation of his character in humanity (17:27–28), idolatry remained culpable (17:29); and now, given the climactic and more complete revelation of his purpose in the historic act of raising Jesus, it became inexcusable (17:31).²⁰⁸⁰

They have brought Paul before an official hearing; audaciously, Paul warns *them* of the impending judgment against idolatry (17:30–31)!²⁰⁸¹

²⁰⁷² Cf., e.g., Seneca, *Dial.* 1.1.5; Musonius Rufus 17, p. 108.8; *Jub.* 6:8; *Sib. Or.* 3.8; Sir 17:3; Wis 2:23; Philo, *Creation* 69, 139. Children were supposed to bear the image of their parents (P.Oxy. 37; Silius Italicus 2.633–35; Suetonius, *Jul.* 52.2; Ps.-Dionysius, *Epideictic* 2.264–65), thus potentially exposing adulterers (Ps.-Phoc. 177–78; *Num. Rab.* 9:1; Heliodorus, *Ethiop.* 4.8).

²⁰⁷³ Paul's “the deity” (*to theion*) remains intelligible in the Greek sphere (Plutarch, *Apoll.* 14, *Mor.* 108E; Strabo 16.2.35).

²⁰⁷⁴ For gold statues in Athens, see, e.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 34.19.54; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.20.

²⁰⁷⁵ Sources in Conzelmann, *Acts*, 145; Rüpke, *Religion*, 55–59. Middle Platonists deemed God transcendent and ineffable, but justified images for visualizing him (Maximus of Tyre 2.1–2, 10; on God's ineffability, see Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:110–26).

²⁰⁷⁶ See Balch, “Areopagus Speech,” 67–72.

²⁰⁷⁷ Gentiles knew that Jews rejected images (Strabo 16.2.35–37; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9). Some praised other peoples for it (Tacitus, *Germania* 9).

²⁰⁷⁸ Recommended before reaching offensive elements; see *Rhet. Alex.* 30, 1438b.4–10; Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 36.

²⁰⁷⁹ E.g., Nock, *Conversion*, 164–86; Stowers, “Resemble Philosophy,” 91–92. Stoics, however, believed that the ideal wise person would not need to “change” thinking (Arius Didymus 2.7.11m, pp. 96–97.5–8).

²⁰⁸⁰ Wisdom (Wis 7:26) and the Logos (Philo, *Conf.* 97, 147; *Spec. Laws* 1.81 and passim) as God's image also provided early Christians a bridge (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), though not developed here.

²⁰⁸¹ Hansen, “Preaching,” 315–16. For consistency of such audacity with the historical Paul, cf. Paul's preaching in this same period in 1 Cor 1:17–25; 2:4–5; 1 Thess 1:9–10.

Despite philosophic detractors (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.19.26), many Greeks believed in divine wrath and judgment. Most did not, however, envision a future *day* of universal judgment.²⁰⁸² That God would “judge the world in righteousness” reflects biblical language (Ps 9:8; 96:13; 98:9), as does the concept of a “day” of judgment.²⁰⁸³

Least intelligible to Paul’s audience, however, was *raising him from the dead* (17:31; cf. 17:18, 32).²⁰⁸⁴ Some thinkers even regarded long-term bodily existence as undesirable.²⁰⁸⁵ God has granted humanity *assurance* or “proof” (*pistis*) of history’s future resolution (17:31); Jesus’s resurrection is the basis for faith (*pistis*). After Paul reaches this climax (24:21; 26:23), his audience interrupts him (17:32; cf. 2:37; 10:44; 22:22; 26:24).

17:32–34: RESPONSE TO PAUL’S SPEECH

As in other locations (e.g., 14:4; 17:4–5; 23:7–9; 28:24), Paul’s hearers divide in their response to his speech (17:32).²⁰⁸⁶ Here some prove hostile, others open-minded, while a small number (much smaller than in, e.g., most synagogues where Paul has preached) accept his message. Athenian crowds traditionally interrupted and ridiculed some speakers (Plutarch, *Demosth.* 6.3; 7.1); but disciples should be prepared for ridicule from the ignorant (Luke 6:22–23).

We will hear you again (17:32) could be politely putting Paul off (cf. 24:25), but the sentence’s Greek construction (*men . . . de*) suggests that this second group responds significantly differently than the first.²⁰⁸⁷ Paul had at least passed the test of offering something *novel* (17:21); although not offered a lectureship, he would not be restricted from conversations in the marketplace. Compared to Macedonia, these responses are positive.

²⁰⁸² Plato and Aristotle viewed the cosmos as eternal (Adams, *Stars*, 107–9). Epicureans (Adams, *Stars*, 109–14) and Stoics (114–24), however, did envision the cosmos coming to an end. For Stoics, it was repeated cyclically (118–20; Diogenes Laertius 7.156).

²⁰⁸³ Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 30:3; Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; cf. *1 En.* 10:6, 12; 84:4; 94:9; 96:8; 97:3; 98:8; 99:15; *Jub.* 16:9; 1QpHab 12.14; 13.2–3; 1QM 7.5. This passage envisions a fixed day, as in Acts 1:7.

²⁰⁸⁴ See N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 32–38; K. L. Anderson, *Raised*, 92–114.

²⁰⁸⁵ See, e.g., Plato, *Cratyl.* 400BC; Philo, *Dreams* 1.139.

²⁰⁸⁶ Many correlate these responses roughly to hostile Epicureans and open-minded Stoics (17:18), although much of the Areopagus was neither.

²⁰⁸⁷ Agreeing to disagree on some points yet promising to meet again for further discussion appears amicable in Tacitus, *Dial.* 42.

More important, some hearers *joined* Paul (17:34), becoming adherents of the movement (5:13; 9:26; 17:4). Some critics challenge Luke's account of converts by suggesting that Achaia's "first convert" appears to be from Corinth (1 Cor 16:15). Paul speaks explicitly only of the first *household* conversion there;²⁰⁸⁸ indeed, from the standpoint of Roman administration, Athens was a free city (Pliny, *Nat.* 4.7.24), hence not officially even *part* of Achaia.²⁰⁸⁹

Luke reports converts of status when possible (8:27, 38; 13:12; 17:12; 18:8), whose opinions carried weight with others. As a member of the town's highest aristocratic court, Dionysius "the Areopagite" was a municipal decurion. For even *one* Areopagite to join the new movement was a great success.²⁰⁹⁰

Luke follows his usual practice of mentioning women converts explicitly along with men, where he has that information available (16:15; 17:4, 12). Luke does not call Damaris an Areopagite; women rarely if ever held such roles.²⁰⁹¹ But others could also be present for the hearing; the Areopagus court location lay in a fairly public area of the Agora.²⁰⁹² Luke naming her may suggest that Damaris is a person of status. She might have been a philosopher, hence part of the group that accompanied Paul to the Areopagus from the marketplace (17:18–19).²⁰⁹³ Since Luke does not highlight this status, she could be a former or current disciple or merely have intellectual interests.

18:1–11: MINISTRY IN CORINTH

In contrast to his experience in Macedonia (16:19–17:14), Paul is welcome in Achaia and able to settle here (18:11). The heart of Paul's stay in Corinth is Jesus's promise of protection (18:9–10), which the second part of the

²⁰⁸⁸ With Thrall, 2 *Corinthians*, 87.

²⁰⁸⁹ See C. S. Keener, "Note on Athens: Do 1 Corinthians 16.15 and Acts 17.34 Conflict?" *JGRCJ* 7 (2010): 137–39; idem, "Paul and the Corinthian Believers," pages 46–62 in Westerholm, *Blackwell Companion to Paul*, 49.

²⁰⁹⁰ Cf. similarly Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 6.14–17, 22.

²⁰⁹¹ Despite exaggerations, earlier Athens limited respectable married women's public activities; Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.17–22, 30; Lysias, *Or.* 3.6, §97; Plutarch, *Bride* 32, *Mor.* 142D; for nuance, see J. Gould, "Law, Custom, and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens," *JHS* 100 (1980): 38–59 (47, 50); esp. L. Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 190–98.

²⁰⁹² Hemer, "Paul at Athens," 349.

²⁰⁹³ See Reimer, *Women*, 247. Epicureans (17:18) and Pythagoreans allowed women disciples; some Stoics in principle welcomed women students, although avoiding technical philosophic knowledge (Musonius Rufus 4, p. 42.31–37; p. 48.1–26).

account (18:12–17) fulfills. Probably because he lacks the details available for his “we” material (contrast 16:10–40), Luke concisely summarizes Paul’s long (18:11) stay in Corinth, when Paul clearly founded Corinth’s Jesus movement (1 Cor 3:6; 4:15).²⁰⁹⁴

Luke’s details seem independent from Paul’s letters to Corinth; despite his interests, he omits most high-status members (Rom 16:1–2, 23; 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15) and miracles there (2 Cor 12:12).²⁰⁹⁵ These discrete accounts nevertheless independently attest various details, such as the following:²⁰⁹⁶

- Aquila and Priscilla are a married ministry team (Rom 16:3; Acts 18:2, 26).
- They use their home for God’s work (Acts 18:3; Rom 16:5), and are known in Corinth (1 Cor 16:19).
- They have connections with Rome (Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3) and Ephesus (Acts 18:18–19; 1 Cor 16:19).
- Paul supports himself by a trade while in Corinth (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12; 9:6).
- The conversion and baptism of Crispus (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14).
- The participation of Timothy (Acts 18:5; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10–11; 2 Cor 1:19).
- The participation of Silas (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 1:19).
- Paul begins the Corinthian mission before Silas and Timothy arrive (Acts 18:1–4; 1 Thess 3:1, 6).
- Their arrival apparently supplies Paul’s financial needs (compare Acts 18:5 with 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:15).
- Paul ministered briefly in Athens en route (Acts 17:15–34; 1 Thess 3:1).
- Both sources *might* mention the same Sosthenes (Acts 18:17; 1 Cor 1:1).
- The Corinthian congregation probably included a Jewish element (1 Cor 1:22–24; 9:20; 10:32; 12:13; 2 Cor 11:22).
- Later, Apollos follows (Acts 18:24–28; 1 Cor 1:12; 4:15), and belongs to the same circle (Acts 18:26–27; 1 Cor 16:12).
- Paul afterward visits Ephesus at length (Acts 18:19; 19:8–10; 1 Cor 15:32; 16:8).

²⁰⁹⁴ For one fuller reconstruction of Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians, based especially on the extant Corinthian correspondence, see Keener, “Corinthian Believers.” For more on Corinth, see Engels, *Roman Corinth*; J. Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (3rd rev. ed.; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002); Adams and Horrell, *Christianity at Corinth*; Schowalter and Friesen, *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*; Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 45–67.

²⁰⁹⁵ Fitting his emphasis, Luke reports on the synagogue there, but his inclusion of details such as names suggests genuine information (Acts 18:7–8). Actual conflicts of detail with 1 Thess 3 (versus omissions) may stem from Luke’s limited information or from condensing it (Acts 18:17; discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 3:2740–42).

²⁰⁹⁶ Following esp. Witherington, *Acts*, 537.

Other elements cohere with extrinsic details, such as the timing of the expulsion from Rome and Gallio's governorship.

A Closer Look: Corinth

Corinth was just 53 miles (85 km) west of Athens, Paul's previous major stop.²⁰⁹⁷ As capital of Achaia (Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.1) and a Roman colony (Strabo 8.6.23; Pausanias 2.1.2), Corinth was strategic for disseminating teaching (earlier, cf. Diogenes the Cynic in Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.5). Population estimates vary widely, with the range of fifty to a hundred thousand being likeliest for this period. Latin dominates first-century civic architecture and inscriptions;²⁰⁹⁸ among Latin religious inscriptions, 63 percent involve the imperial cult.²⁰⁹⁹ Roman names among Paul's acquaintances here are not surprising (Acts 18:2, 7–8).

Nevertheless, Greek elements also persisted, though publicly flourishing only in the second century.²¹⁰⁰ Many Greeks from surrounding Achaia settled there,²¹⁰¹ and the Jewish immigrant community (18:4) presumably spoke Greek, like the majority of Roman Jews²¹⁰² (and other Mediterranean Diaspora Jews).²¹⁰³ Although the official language was Latin, first-century CE pottery graffiti demonstrate that many residents continued to use Greek in everyday life.²¹⁰⁴

²⁰⁹⁷ See, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Din.* 2; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.7.24; Dio Chrysostom, *Or. Or.* 6.1–6; 37.4–5. For the route, see Finegan, *Apostles*, 142–44.

²⁰⁹⁸ J. H. Kent, *The Inscriptions, 1926–1950 (Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens)*, 8.3; Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966), p. 19; D. W. J. Gill, "Corinth: A Roman Colony in Achaia," *BZ* 37 (2, 1993): 259–64.

²⁰⁹⁹ Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 101–2.

²¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., J. C. Walters, "Civic Identity in Roman Corinth and Its Impact on Early Christians," pages 397–417 in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*, 397–410.

²¹⁰¹ Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 71–73. Remains show that local habitation continued even before Corinth's Roman refounding (W. L. Willis, "Corinthusne deletus est?" *BZ* 35 [2, 1991]: 233–41).

²¹⁰² See *CII* 1:6–143; Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 75–92 [esp. 75], 256; D. Noy, "Writing in Tongues: The Use of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew in Jewish Inscriptions from Roman Italy," *JJS* 48 (2, 1997): 300–311. Cf. also 1–2 Corinthians, and 1 Clement.

²¹⁰³ E.g., J. H. Kroll, "The Greek Inscriptions of the Sardis Synagogue," *HTR* 94 (1, 2001): 5–55.

²¹⁰⁴ N. Bookidis, "Religion in Corinth: 146 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.," pages 141–64 in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*, 152. Also nearly all the curse tablets.

Trade and crafts brought Corinth wealth (Strabo 8.6.20, 23), despite its territory's infertility (8.6.23).²¹⁰⁵ The disparity of rich and poor here was, however, conspicuous,²¹⁰⁶ as was Corinth's reputation for immorality, both in earlier times²¹⁰⁷ and in new, Roman Corinth.²¹⁰⁸ ****

Suetonius also reports Claudius's command for *Jews to leave Rome* (Acts 18:2). Suetonius attributes the expulsion to habitual disturbance instigated by one "Chrestus" (*Claud.* 25.4) – an attribution naturally not highlighted in Luke's apologetic narrative. Rome had previously expelled other groups,²¹⁰⁹ including Jews.²¹¹⁰ Given other evidence for Roman mistrust of foreign cults in this period,²¹¹¹ including Judaism,²¹¹² Claudius's actions undoubtedly played well politically.

A Closer Look: Claudius's Expulsion

Although it is uncertain, Jesus's followers may have been involved in the debates that provoked the expulsion. Suetonius knows how to spell "Christians" (*Nero* 16.2, probably regarding 64 CE), but a written source on which he draws regarding events of c. 49 CE may not have. Probably debates about the messiah, the Jewish king, seemed to risk sedition (cf. Acts 17:7); someone unfamiliar with Jewish messianism changed the unintelligible *Christos* (Christ) to the Greek name *Chrēstos*.²¹¹³

²¹⁰⁵ For its wealth, see also Martial, *Epig.* 5.35.3; Dio Chrysostom [Favorinus], *Or.* 37.36. For manufacturing there, see Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 33–39; for the service sector, 43–65 (though this emphasis is disputed); for some persons of means in the church, G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 69–96.

²¹⁰⁶ E.g., Alciphron, *Paras.* 24 (Chascobuces to Hypnotrapezus), 3.60, ¶1.

²¹⁰⁷ Aristophanes, *Lys.* 91; Pindar, *Encomia* frg. 122; Strabo 8.6.20; 12.3.36; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.5.

²¹⁰⁸ Martial, *Epig.* 10.70.11–12; Ps.-Lucian, *Affairs* 51.

²¹⁰⁹ Valerius Maximus 1.3.3–4; Suetonius, *Aug.* 42.3. Cf. astrologers in Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; *Vit.* 14.4; *Dom.* 15; Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.52.3; *Hist.* 2.62.

²¹¹⁰ Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; Dio Cassius 57.18.5; somewhat differently, Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85; more apologetically, Philo, *Embassy* 157–60; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81–83.

²¹¹¹ E.g., Petronius, *Sat.* 16–26; Plutarch, *Superst.* 2, *Mor.* 166A–B; Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.62; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.64–80.

²¹¹² E.g., Plutarch, *T.-T.* 4.6.1–2, *Mor.* 671C–672C; *Superst.* 8, *Mor.* 169C; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.100–3; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.4; 5.5; Suetonius, *Aug.* 93; *Tib.* 36; Persius, *Sat.* 5.179–84.

²¹¹³ E.g., A. D. Nock, "Religious Developments from the Close of the Republic to the Death of Nero," pages 465–511 in *The Augustan Empire: 44 B.C.–A.D. 70* (CAH 10; ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934, repr. 1966), 500; Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 211; Riesner, *Early Period*, 162–66. *Chrēstos* was not a common Jewish name (Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 25 n. 2), and confusion between the terms became common (H. Mattingly, *Christianity in the Roman*

Suetonius and Acts may suggest that Claudius's expulsion occurred in 49 CE. Dio Cassius claims that in 41 CE Claudius did not expel the Jewish community, merely forbidding them to assemble (60.6.6b–7). But Dio wrote long after Suetonius, and Acts is our earliest, though least complete, source for an expulsion. Dio's account differs sufficiently from that of Suetonius to suggest that he refers to a different incident (Dio's history for 49 CE is no longer extant).²¹¹⁴ Given the broader pattern of restrictions on Jews and other foreign "superstitions" at this time, Dio probably simply attests an earlier, less stringent restriction²¹¹⁵ (though conservative Jews who could might emigrate rather than fail to assemble).

Claudius's decree must be (against some) broader than against only ringleaders or Jewish Jesus-followers; the latter were surely too few to have warranted Suetonius's notice. Nevertheless, Luke's *all Jews* probably employs hyperbole. However Claudius's decree was worded, Rome's military would not actually enforce the expulsion of an estimated forty to fifty thousand Jews in Rome.²¹¹⁶ Aside from leaving Jewish districts temporarily vacant it might have removed too many workers abruptly from the Tiber's docks.²¹¹⁷ Presumably at least Jewish Roman citizens, who constituted one of Rome's Jewish communities, would be exempt.²¹¹⁸ But figures prominent in disputes about the Christ would be conspicuous, so if Aquila and Priscilla were already Jesus-followers, they might find departure in their best interests, whether or not they were also Roman citizens.²¹¹⁹ Corinth provided a natural destination; a Roman colony with other Jews and many

Empire [New York: Norton, 1967], 30; Justin, 1 *Apol.* 4; PGM 4.1234). See further Keener, "Edict of Claudius" (*Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*; forthcoming).

²¹¹⁴ See, e.g., Nock, "Developments," 500; Fitzmyer, *Acts* (1998), 620; R. Riesner, "Pauline Chronology," pages 9–29 in Westerholm, *Blackwell Companion to Paul*, 13.

²¹¹⁵ Cf. D. Slingerland, "Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4 and the Account in Cassius Dio," *JQR* 79 (4, 1989): 305–22; A. A. Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 167–71.

²¹¹⁶ Jewish life continued in Rome even after Tiberius's earlier expulsion (see *CIJ* 1:lxixiii). Josephus and Dio Cassius, both explicit about Tiberius's expulsion, remain silent about Claudius's, which was therefore likely less sweeping or effective. Even a general ban was sometimes ineffectual (Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.52).

²¹¹⁷ For Jews probably working there, see J. S. Jeffers, "Jewish and Christian Families in First-Century Rome," pages 128–50 in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 131.

²¹¹⁸ Philo, *Embassy* 157; cf. Judge, *First Christians*, 444.

²¹¹⁹ Their names could suggest citizenship (Judge, *First Christians*, 562), but even many Greek-speaking (as well as Latin-speaking) Roman Jews took Roman names. Aquila hails from Pontus, his parents perhaps part of the Roman Jewish Diaspora effected by Tiberius.

Greek-speakers, it also was closely connected with Rome by travelers and commerce.***

Paul joins *Aquila* and *Priscilla* (18:2); after this, Luke refers to her before her husband, normally done only if the wife was of higher status.²¹²⁰ They share *the same trade* (18:3). In the eastern empire, women could be merchants and traders²¹²¹ and artisans,²¹²² including in working leather.²¹²³ Many people had only sufficient room to sleep in their dwellings, so a couple that hosts congregations (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19) was probably financially better off than some (at least after they recovered from the expulsion, Acts 18:2).

Corinth had many shops along Lechaëum Road, lining the forum and in the recently completed North Market,²¹²⁴ but much work could be done from the home. Possibly the couple had a ground-floor tenement business and slept in the mezzanine above the workshop.²¹²⁵ Workers in particular trades often lived in the same neighborhoods, both for buyers' convenience and due to shared interests and needs.²¹²⁶ Because gentile trade associations had religious dimensions,²¹²⁷ however, *Aquila* and *Priscilla* may reside in a largely Jewish or immigrant neighborhood, making another Jewish believer of the same trade particularly welcome.

A Closer Look: Paul's Work

Luke would not have invented Paul's manual labor in Corinth (1 Cor 4:11; 9:6, 15, 18; 2 Cor 11:23, 27; earlier, 1 Thess 2:9). As in Acts 20:34, Luke mentions it only in passing; he even omits Mark's report that Jesus was a

²¹²⁰ See, e.g., M. B. Flory, "Where Women Precede Men: Factors Influencing the Order of Names in Roman Epitaphs," *CJ* 79 (3, 1984): 216–24; *Mek. Pisha* 1.17–34.

²¹²¹ See Arlandson, *Women*, 73–82; B. W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 174–76; R. P. Saller, "Women, Slaves, and the Economy of the Roman Household," pages 185–204 in *Early Christian Families in Context* (ed. D. L. Balch and C. Osiek; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 193–94.

²¹²² Arlandson, *Women*, 82–91; Ascough, *Lydia*, 71–75.

²¹²³ Reimer, *Women*, 205.

²¹²⁴ See, e.g., A. B. West, *Latin Inscriptions, 1896–1926 (Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens)*, 8.2; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), #21, p. 19; Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 60.

²¹²⁵ Cf. Packer, "Housing," 80–85; Stambaugh, *City*, 149, 174, 189; Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses*, 73, 80. For Corinth, see McRay, *Archaeology*, 82–83.

²¹²⁶ Jer 37:21; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 69–70; Stambaugh, *City*, 150–51.

²¹²⁷ Harland, *Associations*, 61–74, 115–36; J. N. Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (JSNTSup 132; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 117–23. Association meals could be dedicated to deities (Harland, *Associations*, 77; cf. 115–36).

carpenter (Mark 6:3). Paul's labor in Corinth (along with receiving help from Philippi) disturbed many Corinthians (1 Cor 9:6; cf. 2 Cor 11:7–9; 12:13).²¹²⁸

The elite despised most forms of manual labor,²¹²⁹ some forms more than others.²¹³⁰ Old Corinth hosted many laborers, to others' disdain.²¹³¹ (By contrast, manual laborers valued their own work more highly.)²¹³² Philosophers (common in first-century Corinth; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.9) often shared elite condescension toward the laborers.²¹³³ Philosophers varied as to whether sages should engage in manual labor, but many did not view it highly.²¹³⁴ Some charged fees,²¹³⁵ or depended on rich patrons,²¹³⁶ to many others' disdain, Cynics begged.²¹³⁷

But some Cynics and sympathetic Stoics shared more favorable views toward manual labor.²¹³⁸ The early Stoic Cleanthes, in particular, worked to earn his living (Diogenes Laertius 7.5.170). Extant Jewish sources reveal a high work ethic,²¹³⁹ and a number of early rabbis practiced a trade alongside their studies,²¹⁴⁰ though others preferred full-time Torah study.²¹⁴¹

Paul's family of origin undoubtedly had means (Acts 9:1; 22:3), but even an educated Roman citizen would need means of support coming to a new city.

²¹²⁸ Cf. many commentators, e.g., Keener, *Corinthians*, 77, 228–29, 242–43; for part of the social context, see Hock, *Social Context*, 58–59.

²¹²⁹ See Hock, *Social Context*, 35–36, 44, 60. Earlier, Polybius 26.1.1–3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 9.15.2; 9.25.2.

²¹³⁰ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21–23; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 360.25–27; *m. Qidd.* 4:14.

²¹³¹ Polybius 38.12.5, 147 BCE (Grant, *Paul*, 15); Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 18, 99.

²¹³² Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.56; 7.112–15; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 120.

²¹³³ R. M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 73–74.

²¹³⁴ Hock, *Social Context*, 52–59. Lucian preferred ignorant laborers to lazy, ignorant philosophers (*Indictment* 6–7, 8, 11; *Runaways* 17).

²¹³⁵ Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.60; Philodemus, *Prop.* col. 23.23–29; Plutarch, *St. Cont.* 20, *Mor.* 1043E (Zeno); Lucian, *Hermot.* 9; *Phil. Sale* 24; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.10.494. Socrates opposed this (Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.6.11–13; Diogenes Laertius 2.27), in contrast to sophists (e.g., Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.11.591; 2.21.604), although some of the latter used a sliding scale (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.21.519) or waived fees for the needy (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.23.606).

²¹³⁶ E.g., Diogenes Laertius 2.69.

²¹³⁷ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.9; Diogenes, *Ep.* 10; Crates, *Ep.* 17; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.46, 56, 59; 10.119.

²¹³⁸ Musonius Rufus 1, p. 32.28; cf. 11, p. 80.15; Arius Didymus 2.7.5b2, p. 14.14–16; p. 16.10–11; 2.7.11k, p. 82.19–23; Grant, *Christianity and Society*, 74–75.

²¹³⁹ E.g., Prov 10:4; 12:11, 24; 13:4; 14:23; Sir 7:15; Ps.-Phoc. 153–54, 158; *m. Abot* 1:10.

²¹⁴⁰ See *m. Abot* 2:2; *Sipre Deut.* 42.3.3; Safrai, “Education,” 964–65.

²¹⁴¹ Sir 38:24, 32–33; *m. Abot* 3:5; *Qidd.* 4:14.

Status tension was common,²¹⁴² and Paul was ready to “enslave” himself, if necessary, to reach everyone (1 Cor 9:18–19). Although Paul could have acquired his manual skills later, he may have simply learned his father’s trade; fathers normally arranged for their sons to learn trades by apprenticeship.²¹⁴³

What did Paul work in (Acts 18:3)? Linen-workers, probably as a guild, constituted a large group of workers in Tarsus (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21).²¹⁴⁴ Relevant to Corinth, linen was used in sails and stall awnings (Pliny, *Nat.* 19.5.22–19.6.25). But linen-workers were poor (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.23) and excluded from Tarsian citizenship (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21–23), neither of which fits Paul’s family (Acts 21:39; 22:3). Moreover, Paul likelier learned a trade in Jerusalem (22:3), where it was considered shameful for men to weave cloth (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.314).

Paul’s province, Cilicia, was known for its material made from goat hair, especially a warm cloak called *cilicium*.²¹⁴⁵ Paul’s work may have been more in skins than in hair, however.²¹⁴⁶ Many scholars argue that most tents were made of leather, and were rarely made of *cilicium*.²¹⁴⁷ A leatherworker would be able to make things other than tents.²¹⁴⁸ Medieval interpreters often understood the occupation here as *tentmakers*, favoring its etymological sense – though they believed the tents were made of leather.²¹⁴⁹ Many scholars today prefer the patristic view that they were “leatherworkers.”²¹⁵⁰ Certainly leatherworking equipment was more suitable for Paul’s travels than bulkier weaving equipment.²¹⁵¹

If they worked leather, the shop would have oil and blacking; knives, awls, and sharpening stones; a table and stool; and probably benches for customers.²¹⁵² Leatherwork would not require the actual tanning and

²¹⁴² On “status inconsistency,” see esp. Lenski, “Status Crystallization.”

²¹⁴³ E.g., Vitruvius, *Arch.* 6. pref. 3–4; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.314; Lucian, *Career* 1–3; contracts in *P.Oxy.* 275; 724–25; *PSI* 871.

²¹⁴⁴ Later Judean rabbis also connected linen-working with Tarsus (Applebaum, “Economic Life,” 684–85).

²¹⁴⁵ E.g., Charlesworth, *Trade Routes*, 93.

²¹⁴⁶ Goatskins produced better leather than sheepskins (N. Lewis, *Life*, 132).

²¹⁴⁷ E.g., Hock, *Social Context*, 21; Reimer, *Women*, 202–3. But contrast P. Lampe, “Paulus-Zeltmacher,” *BZ* 31 (2, 1987): 256–61. Roman military tents consisted of leather.

²¹⁴⁸ Cf. shoes in J. S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 26, 42. Some suggest that Paul produced many awnings during the Isthmian Games of spring 51 CE.

²¹⁴⁹ Reimer, *Women*, 200–1.

²¹⁵⁰ E.g., Hock, *Social Context*, 21; Reimer, *Women*, 199–203.

²¹⁵¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 107.

²¹⁵² Hock, *Social Context*, 33.

treating of hides, the malodorous work of tanners (Acts 9:43). Leatherworkers learned how to cut and sew leather for durability.²¹⁵³ Paul could also share Christ at work. People often conversed in shops,²¹⁵⁴ unlike metal-smiths, leatherworkers had fairly quiet work that allowed simultaneous conversation,²¹⁵⁵ including discussions about important ideas.^{2156 ****}

The rest of this section repeats familiar Lukan themes, including conflict with a synagogue (18:5–7; cf. 13:44–47); a commission-related vision (18:9–10); and “public accusation before an official” (18:12–13; cf. 16:19–24; 17:5–9, though this ends more favorably).²¹⁵⁷

While Greek and Roman religion dominated Corinth,²¹⁵⁸ this mercantile center also drew many foreign cults.²¹⁵⁹ Corinth held Achaia’s most significant Jewish population.²¹⁶⁰ Although some local Jews were likely Roman citizens (cf. 18:8; more certainly, the God-fearer in 18:7), most were resident aliens comprising a semiautonomous immigrant community.²¹⁶¹

We do not know the *synagogue’s* (18:4) size, though some synagogues could hold even hundreds of people.²¹⁶² The *Greeks* of 18:4 are probably God-fearers (see comment on 10:2). The arrival of *Silas and Timothy* (18:5) apparently relieves Paul from the need to continue supporting himself, probably due to a gift from believers in Philippi (2 Cor 11:8–9; Phil 4:15).²¹⁶³

Facing persistent recalcitrance, Paul withdraws, following Jesus’s teaching (Luke 10:10–11), and so divides the synagogue (13:45–50; 14:1–4; 19:8–9).²¹⁶⁴ The opposing faction keeps the synagogue building, but Paul’s faction gets a significant synagogue leader (Acts 18:8) and undoubtedly a

²¹⁵³ Hock, *Social Context*, 24–25.

²¹⁵⁴ Lysias, *Or.* 24.19–20, §170; practicing oratory in Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.2.1.

²¹⁵⁵ Hock, *Social Context*, 33.

²¹⁵⁶ Hock, *Social Context*, 38–41. Cf. Paul in 1 Thess 2:9, 13.

²¹⁵⁷ Tannehill, *Acts*, 221–26.

²¹⁵⁸ See, e.g., Pausanias 2.2.6–8; 2.3.1; West, *Inscriptions*, #15, line 1 (p. 13).

²¹⁵⁹ Pausanias 2.4.6–7; N. Bookidis, “The Sanctuaries of Corinth,” pages 247–59 in *Corinth: The Centenary, 1896–1996* (ed. C. K. Williams II and N. Bookidis; Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003), 257–58; D. E. Smith, “The Egyptian Cults at Corinth,” *HTR* 70 (3–4, 1977): 201–31.

²¹⁶⁰ Philo, *Embassy* 281; Justin, *Dial.* 1; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 162–66.

²¹⁶¹ See W. A. Meeks, “Corinthian Christians as Artificial Aliens,” pages 129–38 in Engberg-Pedersen, *Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, 130.

²¹⁶² Sanders, *Judaism*, 200; A. R. Seager and A. T. Kraabel, “The Synagogue and the Jewish Community: The Building,” pages 168–77 in Hanfmann, *Sardis*, 178. Cf. Corinth’s synagogue in *CII* 1:518, §718 (though undated and not *in situ*).

²¹⁶³ Paul refuses support from the new Corinthian church (2 Cor 12:13), probably to avoid being treated as its client.

²¹⁶⁴ Corinth’s culture also invited speakers to compete and their followers to divide (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.9; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–5; 2 Cor 10:10–12).

significant benefactor (18:7). *Reviled* (18:6) translates a term (*blasphemeô*) that in religious contexts sometimes involves cursing a deity (perhaps here Jesus, cf. 26:11; 1 Cor 12:3; although the NRSV applies it to Paul; cf. Acts 13:45).

Shaking out one's garment (18:6) might serve as a warning of judgment to covenant-breakers (cf. 22:23; Neh 5:13), even more dramatically than shaking dust from one's feet (Acts 13:51; cf. Luke 9:5; 10:11). It might prove an appropriate response to their "blasphemy," though less expensive than tearing the garments (cf. Acts 14:14; *m. Sanh.* 7:5).

One could be responsible for one's own blood (death; Josh 2:19; 2 Sam 1:16; 1 Kgs 2:32, 33, 37; Ezek 18:13) or for another's (e.g., Deut 19:10; 21:7–9; 22:8; 2 Sam 21:1; Luke 11:50–51; Acts 5:28); in 18:6, Paul, who has faithfully warned his hearers, is free from responsibility for their judgment (see Acts 20:26; Ezek 33:4).

Paul goes *to the Gentiles* (18:6) in response to the synagogue's rejection (cf. Rom 11:11). Although some gentiles would avoid synagogues as communities of a foreign ethnic faith, Paul remained there when possible because the gospel belonged first to the people of Israel. After withdrawing from one synagogue (Acts 13:46) Paul continues going to others (14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4; 19:8; 28:17); his judgment pronouncements (13:46; 18:6; 28:25–28) reflect *local* judgments (cf. Luke 10:12–15) rather than eternal rejection of Israel; they also fit God's larger plan (cf. 24:47; Rom 11:11, 30–32).

Titius Justus (Acts 18:7), perhaps the synagogue's primary benefactor, is probably a Roman citizen (indicated by the Latin *nomen* plus *cognomen*).²¹⁶⁵ Using local homes to reach communities fits Jesus's instructions (Luke 9:4; 10:7; Mark 6:10).²¹⁶⁶ The average well-to-do Roman home in Corinth could comfortably recline nine to twelve guests in the dining area, with potentially thirty to forty more in the larger atrium.²¹⁶⁷ In 18:8,

²¹⁶⁵ E. A. Judge, *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St Paul* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Press, 1982), 13, 36; Jeffers, *World*, 204, 206. Some plausibly identify him with Gaius in Rom 16:23 (E. J. Goodspeed, "Gaius Titius Justus," *JBL* 69 [1950]: 382–83; Blue, "House Church," 174–75; cf. 1 Cor 1:14), though certainly house congregations proliferated after this scene (e.g., Rom 16:1; perhaps 1 Cor 16:15).

²¹⁶⁶ Paul's circle represents a disproportionate number of Latin names (Judge, *Rank*, 13; idem, "Roman Base"); also of the economically stable (Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 75), fitting what we know about Corinth.

²¹⁶⁷ Murphy-O'Connor, *Corinth*, 156. During the empire, triclinia grew larger than in an earlier period, and eventually could host up to about twenty comfortably (see K. M. D. Dunbabin, "Convivial Spaces: Dining and Entertainment in the Roman Villa," *JRA* 9 [1996]: 66–80).

another noteworthy conversion is that of the synagogue leader (see note on Acts 13:15), probably the same Crispus baptized by Paul in 1 Cor 1:14.²¹⁶⁸ Despite limited annual rainfall in Corinth (15 in., 40 cm), possible sites for immersing converts were plentiful.²¹⁶⁹

Other named Corinthian Christians include:

- Gaius (1 Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23)
- Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15, 17)
- Fortunatus, Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17)
- Quartus, Erastus (Rom 16:23)
- Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2)
- Probably Tertius (Rom 16:22; why else send personal greetings?)
- Probably some members of Chloe's household (1 Cor 1:11)²¹⁷⁰
- Probably Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1; cf. Acts 18:17)
- Possibly Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, if in Corinth (Rom 16:21)

The Lord, presumably Jesus (cf. Acts 9:17, 27; 11:16; 18:8), assures Paul that he will be able to stay longer more safely than in Macedonia (18:9–11). Corinthians knew of revelatory dreams in nearby sanctuaries;²¹⁷¹ following biblical precedent, Luke's audience is ready for visions from the true Lord (Acts 2:17; 16:9). Paul had many (2 Cor 12:1–9).

God's revelations often include, "Do not fear" (Acts 18:9), including in dreams (e.g., Gen 15:1; 26:24).²¹⁷² It is often linked with, "I will be with you" (Acts 18:10; cf., e.g., Deut 31:6; Isa 41:10; 43:1–2, 5; Jer 46:28), which is often a special encouragement for mission (Gen 26:3; 31:3; Exod 3:12; Josh 1:5; Judg 6:12, 16; Jer 1:19).²¹⁷³ The Lord's *many . . . people* (18:10) cannot imply Gallio (18:12; though cf. Isa 45:1); it might imply the few already-converted believers, supportive persons not yet converted (cf. Luke 10:6; cf. Jon 4:11), or (likeliest) those who will be converted through Paul's ministry

²¹⁶⁸ His Roman cognomen could suggest his citizenship (Gill, "Achaia," 451; Judge, *First Christians*, 562).

²¹⁶⁹ Pliny, *Nat.* 4.4.11; Pausanias 2.3.5; J. C. Biers, "Lavari est vivere: Baths in Roman Corinth," pages 303–19 in Williams and Bookidis, *Corinth: The Centenary*; M. E. Landon, "Beyond Peirene: Toward a Broader View of Corinthian Water Supply," pages 43–62 in *ibid.*; B. A. Robinson, "Fountains and the Formation of Cultural Identity at Roman Corinth," pages 111–40 in Schowalter and Friesen, *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*. On ancient baths, see Keener, *Acts*, 3:2751–54.

²¹⁷⁰ Theissen, *Setting*, 93; Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 57, 59.

²¹⁷¹ Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 100–1, 105.

²¹⁷² Such dream oracles could also include the promise, "I am with you" (Gen 26:24; 28:15).

²¹⁷³ Note especially Jer 1:8 (for a divine agent to the nations, 1:5).

(cf. Zech 2:11).²¹⁷⁴ *To harm you* (18:10) means here, “with the *result* of harming you” (cf. 18:12). Paul’s *teaching* there (18:11) includes some Jesus tradition (e.g., 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3).

18:12–17: GALLIO REFUSES PAUL’S CASE

Conflicts with elements within the synagogue remain (18:4–8), but this time the Roman proconsul (representing Rome in a way the Macedonian officials he had encountered did not) refuses to act against him. This action helps fulfill Jesus’s promise of protection (18:9–10). The governor’s statement supports Luke’s apologetic: this is an internal religious debate within Judaism, over which Roman courts properly exercise no jurisdiction (18:12–17).

The substance of Luke’s report is surely accurate. Even if Luke had access to the contemporary proconsul’s name,²¹⁷⁵ he would not dare invent an official hearing before a named proconsul in recent memory. We can date Paul’s stay to within a year or two because of an inscription regarding Gallio.²¹⁷⁶ Most scholars date Gallio’s arrival in 51 CE (taking up office officially on July 1), though others argue for 52. Gallio’s illness prevented him from completing a second year. Born in Cordova, Spain, Lucius Junius Gallio was son of Seneca the Elder and brother of Seneca the philosopher (c. 3 BCE–65 CE).²¹⁷⁷

The tribunal (18:12) probably refers to the fairly new *bêma* (Latin *rostra*) in the middle of the south edge of Corinth’s forum; it consisted of an elevated podium covered by a roof upheld by columns.²¹⁷⁸ Synagogues, as resident alien communities, had some rights to settle internal problems according to their own laws and customs (18:15; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.235;

²¹⁷⁴ With Aune, *Prophecy*, 267.

²¹⁷⁵ Very unlikely (Sherwin-White, *Society*, 104–5).

²¹⁷⁶ SIG³ 801; Murphy-O’Connor, *Corinth*, 173–76; see further Riesner, *Early Period*, 202–11. Achaia was a desirable post for proconsuls (cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 8.24.2).

²¹⁷⁷ Cf. Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 4. pref. 12; 5.11.1; *Dial.* 7.1.1.

²¹⁷⁸ O. Broneer, “Corinth: Center of Paul’s Missionary Work in Greece,” *BA* 14 (4, 1951): 78–96 (91–92); Gill, “Achaia,” 449; McRay, *Archaeology*, 333–35. See the inscription in Kent, *Inscriptions*, #322 (pp. 128–29), probably from the first half of the first century. Corinthians knew the image well (2 Cor 5:10). Some suggest an indoor hearing in a basilica at the forum’s eastern edge, but the public beating (18:17) may suggest an outdoor event.

19.283). Yet they also could bring criminal charges to the proconsul.²¹⁷⁹ A governor could not legally try a Roman citizen like Paul (cf. Acts 16:37), unless someone charged him (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.54.141), especially someone with status.²¹⁸⁰ Since the accused did not always heed a summons,²¹⁸¹ accusers might have to ensure the accused's arrival in court, as here (Acts 18:12; cf. 16:19; 17:5; Luke 12:58). Educated Romans knew Greek, and trials were typically conducted in the common language of parties present.²¹⁸² Latin could be a prestige language for provincial Roman citizens, but it was not mandatory,²¹⁸³ and the synagogue community probably spoke Greek.

Paul's accusers charge him with violating *the law* (18:13), probably Jewish rather than Roman law (18:15). Perhaps they leave the charge ambiguous to imply Roman law without risking perjuring themselves; perhaps they simply want him (or at least his gentile followers) excluded from Judaism's exemptions and privileges.²¹⁸⁴ In the wake of recent imperial anti-Judaism, however, their gambit backfires.

Despite Luke's predilection for speeches, Paul lacks opportunity to give one here (18:14a). Gallio's efficient impatience makes some sense, in view of demands on a governor's time. He could not compose all his "own" letters (cf. Cicero, *Quint. fratr.* 1.2.3.8), and in some locations governors' staff had to address 700–750 petitions a day, better than one per minute.²¹⁸⁵ Most governors were short-staffed.²¹⁸⁶ Jury courts (of well-off Roman citizens) decided private suits, with a local official addressing civic cases and an aedile financial ones; the proconsul would address only criminal cases.²¹⁸⁷ Gallio would have no time for minor litigation properly addressed by lower courts; his focus was treason, extortion, forgery, murder, adultery, stirring

²¹⁷⁹ Winter, *Left Corinth*, 295.

²¹⁸⁰ See Rapske, *Custody*, 56–62.

²¹⁸¹ B. W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 108–9.

²¹⁸² Cf. B. W. Winter, "The Importance of the Captatio Benevolentiae in the Speeches of Tertullus and Paul in Acts 24:1–21," *JTS* 42 (2, 1991): 505–31 (526).

²¹⁸³ See J. N. Adams, "'Romanitas' and the Latin Language," *CQ* 53 (1, 2003): 184–205.

²¹⁸⁴ Winter, *Left Corinth*, 288–93, notes that civic authorities regulated the local (taxable) markets, including the provision of kosher, hence nonidolatrous, meats (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.261; cf. 1 Cor 10:25).

²¹⁸⁵ N. Lewis, *Life*, 190. Some conscientious rulers heard cases till nightfall (Suetonius, *Aug.* 33.1).

²¹⁸⁶ See, e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.21.1; 10.22.1–2; 10.27–28; 10.77.1; 10.78.1–2.

²¹⁸⁷ Winter, *Left Corinth*, 44–45, 59.

unrest, and the like.²¹⁸⁸ Ancient sources portray him as the sort of person who would follow protocol strictly.²¹⁸⁹ But Gallio undoubtedly shares with many other Roman aristocrats a prejudice against Jewish superstition; the emperor's example (18:2) frees others to act impatiently with Jewish communities.

Even Luke's brief account of Gallio's speech is appropriate to the latter's rhetorical education.²¹⁹⁰ "I do not wish to judge this matter" (18:15), a historian of Roman law notes, is "the precise answer of a Roman magistrate refusing" his right to take a case outside his normal protocol.²¹⁹¹ Impatience with *questions about words* (18:15; cf. 25:10) addresses common wordy arguments devoid of logic.²¹⁹² Gallio's brother Seneca complained about students whose interest was more about wits and words than their souls,²¹⁹³ more about style than content.²¹⁹⁴ *See to it yourselves* might reflect the Latin expression *videre de*,²¹⁹⁵ which may have stuck in Paul's report and Luke's mind.

Luke would not invent this scene (noting Gallio and missing the opportunity to provide Paul a speech), but it also serves Luke's larger apologetic (cf. Luke 23:4, 14, 22, 47). As a governor, Gallio's decision would establish law for Achaia and would offer, more widely, a favorable precedent. Governors and rulers often looked to such precedents.²¹⁹⁶

In Philippi, Paul learns the value of appealing to his Roman citizenship; in Corinth, before Gallio, he learns Roman administrators' impatience with intra-Jewish disputes. Both of these experiences prepare Paul, and Luke's audience, for the major strategies involved in Paul's custody in the final quarter of Acts (24:19–21; 25:10–11, 18–20).

²¹⁸⁸ Winter, *Left Corinth*, 45–46, 60.

²¹⁸⁹ B. W. Winter, "Rehabilitating Gallio and His Judgement in Acts 18:14–15," *TynBul* 57 (2, 2006): 291–308 (301–2); Winter doubts anti-Judaic motives here. Romans did prefer nonsense approaches (e.g., Valerius Maximus 2.8.2).

²¹⁹⁰ Note repetition of related terms both in 18:14 and in 18:15, and the balanced contrast between two "if" clauses (one in 18:14, the other in 18:15).

²¹⁹¹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 102 (followed by Witherington, *Acts*, 554; Le Cornu, *Acts*, 1010).

²¹⁹² E.g., Valerius Maximus 3.4. ext. 1; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 45.5; 71.7; 82.24; Diogenes Laertius 2.30; Philo, *Good Person* 80.

²¹⁹³ Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 108.23.

²¹⁹⁴ Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 75.1–4; 108.7; especially 115.1–2.

²¹⁹⁵ Cf. J. L. North, "Is IDEIN PERI (Acts 15.6, cf. 18.15) a Latinism?" *NTS* 29 (2, 1983): 264–66; Matt 27:24.

²¹⁹⁶ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.65.2; 10.66.1; 10.108.1; Keener, *Acts*, 1:450–53. Luke diplomatically concludes his narrative in Acts 28 before Nero's actions set a different precedent (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44).

In 18:16, Gallio may not merely dismiss the plaintiffs; the Greek verb may suggest hostility. In the wake of widespread anti-Jewish feeling (18:2), his action in 18:16 apparently permits other gentiles present to vent their anti-Jewish sentiments in 18:17. Court settings were typically boisterous and unruly;²¹⁹⁷ speakers could be shouted down.²¹⁹⁸ Someone condemned might be assaulted by the bystanders (Suetonius, *Julius* 17.2).

Meanwhile, in 18:17 Gallio flagrantly ignores the beating.²¹⁹⁹ Some first-century Roman governors in the east had unconvicted Jewish victims publicly beaten (Philo, *Flacc.* 77), even in front of their tribunals (Josephus, *War* 2.308); but Gallio would not stoop to such behavior. His disinterest and the participation of *all* indicate that this abuse was a crowd action, not the lictors acting on Gallio's behalf.

Some suggest that the rejected Jewish delegation here beats their own leader because he had led them into public humiliation.²²⁰⁰ It is also possible that he instead is a believer or Christian sympathizer (although he is not likely the Crispus of 18:8). But although Luke's condensed language is not finally clear, it seems likelier, with most commentators, that the gentile crowd present beats the leader of the Jewish delegation.²²⁰¹ (This is probably the most common opinion among modern commentators;²²⁰² it was also the suspicion of those responsible for the Western text, who blame Greeks for the beating.)²²⁰³ If so, this narrative parallels Acts 19:33–34, where public Jewish hostility to Paul's ministry backfires.

Luke's compression of material sometimes yields obscurity.²²⁰⁴ Sosthenes (18:17) is apparently Crispus's colleague or replacement. He might be also the presumably Christian Sosthenes in 1 Cor 1:1 (the only other NT occurrence of the name, also associated with Corinth), possibly converted subsequently.

²¹⁹⁷ Diodorus Siculus 40.5a.1; Seneca, *Controv.* 9. pref. 3–5; Pliny, *Ep.* 6.33.3–4; Maximus of Tyre 3.5–6.

²¹⁹⁸ Cf. Cicero, *Fam.* 1.2.2 (the Roman Senate!); Plutarch, *Cic.* 16.3.

²¹⁹⁹ Cf. Luke's other use of the verb *melei* at Luke 10:40.

²²⁰⁰ For the humiliation of plaintiffs discovering defendants' innocence in court, see, e.g., Suetonius, *Claud.* 16.3.

²²⁰¹ Crowds often flocked to trials to be entertained by the oratory (B. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995], 163); they would, of course, get far more entertainment in the governor's court than the lower ones.

²²⁰² Also the depiction in a later but widespread textual variant.

²²⁰³ Johnson, *Acts*, 329.

²²⁰⁴ Elite ancient critics would disapprove; see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Second Letter to Ammaeus* 2; *Demosth.* 5–6; Suetonius, *Grammarians* 10; Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 3.1.

18:18–23: PRELUDE TO EPHEBUS

Although Luke's sources on Ephesus are much less detailed than his source for Philippi, he recognizes and presents Ephesus as the climax of Paul's ministry before his Roman detention. Acts 18:18–23 offers a geographic transition from Corinth, looking both forward to Ephesus and backward to Judea and Antioch. Still, 18:18–23 and 19:1 are quite sparse in travel details, compared to the more detailed itineraries in the "we" material of 20:5–6, 13–16; 21:1–3, 7, 15. As Luke organizes much of Jesus's ministry around a journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9–19),²²⁰⁵ so he provides many of Paul's journeys in Acts (Acts 13:4–14:28; 15:36–16:12; 17:1, 10, 14–15; 18:1; 18:18–23 with 19:1; 20:1–21:16). In 18:19–20:38 and especially in 18:19–19:41, the geographic focus is on Ephesus,²²⁰⁶ with other travels before the "we" material treated mostly cursorily (18:22–23; 19:1; 20:1–4).²²⁰⁷

After Gallio dismisses the case against Paul, Paul remains in Corinth for (an undefined) *considerable time* (18:18; cf. 9:23); as promised in 18:10, Paul remains safe there. Lest Luke's audience miss the point of Gallio's judgment in 18:14–16 that Paul's faith remains Jewish, Luke confirms it with Paul's vow in 18:18.

While reporting Paul's fidelity to the law fits Luke's purpose of synthesizing Judean and Diaspora Christianity, assumptions of a law-resistant Paul²²⁰⁸ reflect an older reading of Paul now largely displaced by the New Perspective(s) and Jesus within Judaism approaches.²²⁰⁹ Paul was not against practicing the law (see, e.g., Rom 3:27–31; 7:12–16; 10:6–8; 1 Cor 7:18–19; Gal 5:6; 6:15), but against abusing it as if it were a means to justify oneself before God by one's own obedience and/or ethnicity.²²¹⁰ Paul practices the law for cultural identification (1 Cor 9:20; cf. Acts 16:3;

²²⁰⁵ Much of this material, which often supplements Mark and Q, may have been oral material Luke collected during his time in Judea (Acts 21:8–27:2).

²²⁰⁶ For background on Ephesus, see esp. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*; idem, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); H. Koester, ed., *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995); R. Oster, *A Bibliography of Ancient Ephesus* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1987); Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesos."

²²⁰⁷ Paul's letters inform us exceptionally thoroughly about Acts 20:1–3, but offer next to nothing about 18:22–23.

²²⁰⁸ So Vielhauer, "Paulinism"; Haenchen, "Acts as Source Material."

²²⁰⁹ See, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Judaism*; Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*.

²²¹⁰ See, e.g., Hill, *Hellenists*, 146; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 716–22.

2 Cor 11:24),²²¹¹ and also affirms his solidarity with his people (Rom 9:3–4; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22). Luke would not make up this vow; he does not “even trouble to tell us that Paul carried out the vow, leaving us to infer this.”²²¹²

Nevertheless, Luke does not explain the point of the vow. Nazirites grew their hair during the period of their vow (Num 6:5), then afterward shaved at the sanctuary and offered the hair to God (Num 6:18),²²¹³ as Luke seems aware (Acts 21:24). Some suggest that, since Paul will not cut his hair again during the vow, he shaves it now and will shave it again only in Jerusalem in 18:22 or in 21:24, revealing there his loyalty to ancestral customs. Others suggest that many in the Diaspora may have offered Nazirite-like (but not technically Nazirite) vows that did not require travel to Jerusalem.²²¹⁴

A major road through Corinth’s forum connected Corinth’s two port towns.²²¹⁵ Lechaëum (to the north) faced the Gulf of Corinth, the Adriatic, and thus Italy, but *Cenchreae* (to the southeast; 18:18) faced the Aegean Sea and thus Asia Minor (cf. 18:18–22).²²¹⁶ Male followers of Isis (especially priests) shaved their heads;²²¹⁷ at Cenchreae, where there was an Isis sanctuary,²²¹⁸ some observers might have thus misunderstood Paul’s shaved head.²²¹⁹ The house church in Cenchreae, of course, knew better (Rom 16:1).

Priscilla and Aquila traveled with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus (Acts 18:18–19; cf. 1 Cor 16:8, 19). They would land at Ephesus’s famous

²²¹¹ An explanation here in Didymus the Blind, *Catena on Acts* 18.18; cf. Jerome, *Letter* 75.

²²¹² Hanson, *Acts*, 187.

²²¹³ Possibly also Josephus, *War* 2.313; later, clearly *b. Yoma* 16a; *Nazir* 45a.

²²¹⁴ Haenchen, *Acts*, 546, reasonably complains that this interpretation “was invented for our passage only”; but biblical law made some procedural exceptions for those who lived far away (Deut 12:21; 14:24). (Perpetual Nazirites might shave periodically; *m. Naz.* 1:4.) More important, not all vows even in Judea were Nazirite: note other vows of specified abstinence (Num 30:2–3; 11QT 53–54; Mark 14:25; Acts 23:12; *m. Abot* 3:13). Possibly one could even devote one’s hair to God by shaving it.

²²¹⁵ Attempts to dig a canal through the isthmus failed (Strabo 1.3.11; Suetonius, *Jul.* 44.3; *Nero* 19.2); successful instead was the 6-kilometer-long *diolkos*, a stone path with carved grooves for transporting smaller ships or cargoes.

²²¹⁶ See Strabo 8.6.4, 22; Philo, *Flacc.* 155; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.4.10; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37.8; *Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth: Results of Investigations by the University of Chicago and Indiana University for the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* (6 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1978–2007); Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 41–44.

²²¹⁷ Plutarch, *Isis* 4, *Mor.* 352C; Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 1.22; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.10; for Egyptian priests generally, cf. Herodotus 2.37; N. Lewis, *Life*, 92.

²²¹⁸ Cf. Pausanias 2.2.3; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.8–17; Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 103–4; R. Scranton, “Harbor-Side Sanctuaries,” pages 53–90 in *Topography and Architecture* (ed. R. Scranton, J. W. Shaw, and L. Ibrahim), vol. 1 of *Kenchreai*, 53–79.

²²¹⁹ But for Jewish hostility, see, e.g., *Sib. Or.* 5.484–91.

harbor.²²²⁰ Culturally Greek Western Asia Minor had surpassed the Greek mainland socially and economically, and Ephesus was the biggest market (Strabo 12.8.15). Estimates of its mid-first-century population vary, often around two hundred thousand (give or take fifty thousand).²²²¹ It is sometimes even ranked the third or fourth city of the empire in terms of strategic importance;²²²² Roman Asia's pronconsul resided there, and it was the hub for imperial communications and tax collection.²²²³

Despite invitation to continue discussion in the synagogue, Paul must depart (18:20–21; cf. 20:16; Luke 4:42–4:43). Paul will return, however (19:1, 8), *if God wills* (18:21), a phrase familiar among Christians²²²⁴ and ancients generally, who recognized the contingency of their plans on the will of God or deities.²²²⁵ Although the earliest Greek manuscripts in 18:22 omit Jerusalem, Paul would not have sailed 200 miles extra south to Caesarea, only to travel north to Antioch by land afterward.²²²⁶ That Paul *went up* from Caesarea presumably means that he visited Jerusalem (cf. 11:2; 24:11; 25:1; vs. “down” to Antioch in 11:27; 15:30; 18:22), perhaps for a festival (as in 20:16)²²²⁷ or to complete his vow (cf. 18:18). Given their proximity (cf. 23:31–33), it made sense for Paul to visit relatives (23:16) and friends in Jerusalem unless he had good reason not to.²²²⁸

Paul's journey on foot from Judea through the Cilician Gates to Ephesus was over 500 miles, and Paul might well not arrive before fall of 53 CE. He spent time in Antioch, his home church (13:1–4; 14:26–28; 15:2), and may seek to consolidate his position in Galatia (if Galatians had already been written) and possibly introduce the collection there (1 Cor 16:1). *The region of Phrygia and Galatia* (18:23) includes Phrygia-Galatia (16:6), an area

²²²⁰ On which, see Pliny, *Ep.* 10.15.1; 10.17A.1; H. Zabeihlicky, “Preliminary Views of the Ephesian Harbor,” pages 201–15 in Koester, *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia*. For its silt problems, see Strabo 14.1.24; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.31.115; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.23.

²²²¹ Cf. P. R. Trebilco, “Asia,” pages 291–362 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 307; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:244 n. 12; L. M. White, “Urban Development and Social Change,” pages 27–79 in Koester, *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia*, 35, 41–43, 46.

²²²² See Trebilco, “Asia,” 305–7; P. Scherrer, “Ephesus: History,” *BNP* 4:1024–29 (1026).

²²²³ Trebilco, “Asia,” 309; Scherrer, “Ephesus,” 1026.

²²²⁴ Rom 1:10; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7; Heb 6:3; Jms 4:15.

²²²⁵ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 8.142; Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.4.17; 5.1.14; *Anab.* 7.3.43; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.23.18; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 45.15; *Ad M. Caes.* 5.40 [55]; 5.43 [58]; 5.55 [70]; *Ad Ant. Imp.* 1.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.333.

²²²⁶ The Roman province of Syria (18:18) included Jerusalem. Conversely, many commentators suggest that northerly summer winds made Paul's detour necessary.

²²²⁷ Also many later manuscripts at 18:21, probably reflecting inference.

²²²⁸ That Luke is not more explicit may reflect space constraints but might also suggest conflict (cf. later Rom 15:31).

evangelized in chapters 13–14, although it might also include Phrygia in a broader sense, beyond Galatia proper, toward Ephesus.²²²⁹ Luke revisits the language of “passing through” regions (18:23) in 19:1, after recounting about Apollos (who prepares for the next story in 19:1–7).

18:24–28: PRISCILLA AND AQUILA HELP APOLLOS

Although equipped with the Spirit, knowledge of the Scripture, and rhetorical skill, Apollos understands only John’s baptism and basic knowledge about the way (18:25). Paul’s associates Priscilla and Aquila help surmount this deficiency (18:26), catalyzing Apollos’s Christian ministry. Luke thus values unity between Apollos and Paul’s circle while highlighting Paul’s apostolic call over Apollos’s gifts (cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6; 4:6).²²³⁰

The issue of John’s preliminary baptism links 18:24–28 with 19:1–7. For Apollos, John’s water baptism is adequate because Apollos has the Spirit (18:25); the disciples in 19:1–7, however, need Christian water baptism because they still need baptism in the Spirit (19:5–6; cf. 2:38–39; Luke 3:15–16).²²³¹

Paul’s letters confirm the connection of Apollos with both Ephesus, where he later returned (1 Cor 16:8, 12; cf. Acts 18:24), and Corinth, where he clearly made a positive impression (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6, 22; 16:12; cf. Acts 18:27), as here. Although he was later invited to visit Corinth again with Timothy and his colleagues (1 Cor 16:10; cf. Acts 19:22), he was not able to do so as yet (1 Cor 16:12).

While God sovereignly works through believers in Jesus outside the central apostolic movement (as in 18:25–26; Luke 9:50), the apostles and their associates apparently desire to connect these movements to the apostolic movement, with its continuity of witness and teaching (cf. Acts 8:14; 11:22–23; 18:26–28). Certainly they must have continuity with the experience of the Spirit (8:15–16; 19:2–6).

²²²⁹ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 120; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:4; Riesner, *Early Period*, 285–86.

²²³⁰ Their collegiality (cf. 1 Cor 16:12) suggests theological compatibility. Leading figures could be friends despite popular assumptions that they were rivals (e.g., Cicero, *Brut.* 1.2–3).

²²³¹ Cornelius and the Ephesian disciples are baptized because the former lacked a symbolic water baptism and the latter baptism in the Spirit. John’s ministry was a salvation-historical transition point (Luke 16:16), so any of Jesus’s apostles baptized by John did not require rebaptism.

*Apollos*²²³² was from *Alexandria* (18:24), the empire's second city (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.11.62), renowned for education.²²³³ Alexandria pretended to be merely "near" Egypt²²³⁴ and mostly recognized only descendants of Greeks (including Macedonians) as citizens.²²³⁵ This was one point of contention with the massive Jewish population.²²³⁶

Alexandria had a thriving Jewish population,²²³⁷ comprising two of Alexandria's five districts (Philo, *Flacc.* 55) or possibly a third of the city.²²³⁸ Alexandria was known for its rhetorical training²²³⁹ (cf. *eloquent* in 18:24),²²⁴⁰ and many Diaspora Jews knew of Alexandrian Jewish exegesis.²²⁴¹ The term translated *well-versed* can mean "powerful," often in oratorical skill²²⁴² (cf. the same Greek term in 7:22 – also connected with Egyptian education; Luke 24:19).

Unlike what is usually argued for John's disciples in 19:4, Apollos already believed in Jesus (18:25), but seems to have learned from merely the periphery of Jesus's movement (perhaps from some travelers in 11:19–20). In contrast to the not-yet Spirit-baptized disciples in 19:2–4, Apollos probably has the Spirit. The phrase translated *burning enthusiasm* in 18:25 is literally "boiling" or "enthusiastic" in or by the spirit, taken by

²²³² "Apollo"-compounded names for Jews were particularly common in Egypt (*CPJ* 3:170; perhaps a friendly contraction for Apollonius, long a popular name in Egypt, Arrian, *Anab.* 3.5).

²²³³ A. W. Argyle, "The Ancient University of Alexandria," *CJ* 69 (4, 1974): 348–50; later, Menander Rhetor 1.3, 360.23–24; D. Engster, "Alexandria als Stadt der Forschung und Technik," *BN* 147 (2010): 49–66.

²²³⁴ *CPJ* 1:61; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.20.13.

²²³⁵ Cf. Strabo 17.1.12; for Greek chauvinism against Egyptians, see *P.Oxy.* 1681.4–7; N. Lewis, *Life*, 31–32.

²²³⁶ *P. Lond.* 1912 = *CPJ* 2:36–55, §153; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.280–86; Barclay, *Jews in Diaspora*, 58–71.

²²³⁷ Philo, *Flacc.* 43, 132; *CPJ* 1:8; *CIJ* 2:356–66.

²²³⁸ D. Delia, "The Population of Roman Alexandria," *TAPA* 118 (1988): 275–92.

²²³⁹ On rhetoric in Alexandria, see R. W. Smith, *The Art of Rhetoric in Alexandria: Its Theory and Practice in the Ancient World* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974); B. W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (SNTSMS 96; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19–112.

²²⁴⁰ The term can mean simply "educated," but it often designates rhetorical skill, which fits Apollos's role in 1 Cor 1–4.

²²⁴¹ The prominent Alexandrian Jewish scholar Philo (see *Embassy*; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.259–60) reflects and further shaped Alexandrian Jewish approach to Scripture; but cf. also the more judgment-oriented *Sibylline Oracles*.

²²⁴² Aeschines, *Embassy* 48; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.4.5; Sir 21:7. Alexandrians were reputed for enthusiasm and vigor (unfairly negatively characterized in Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.1, 41–42, 65, 68).

many as Apollos's human spirit but, in light of Luke's pervasive emphasis, probably meaning God's Spirit (as in 19:21; 20:22).²²⁴³

Priscilla and Aquila *took him aside*, probably for at least a meal in their home (on ancient hospitality, see the excursus at 16:15), and provided him further information about Jesus and his movement to which he had previously lacked access (18:26). Luke normally mentions first the dominant member of a pair, so Priscilla probably takes the lead in instructing Apollos here.²²⁴⁴

Apollos's eloquence would help the Corinthian believers, given competition from the synagogue (18:6–8, 12–13) and the absence of Paul (cf. 1 Cor 3:6). Believers in Ephesus supplied him letters of recommendation (Acts 18:27; see comment on 9:2).²²⁴⁵

19:1–7: JOHN'S DISCIPLES NEED THE SPIRIT

Paul here helps some deficient disciples receive the Spirit (cf. 8:15–16). Paul instructs them as Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos (18:24–28), but they know less than did Apollos (18:25). Although many scholars contend very plausibly that they are disciples of Jesus, I find more likely that they are disciples of John who did not know that his promised coming one had come (19:4).²²⁴⁶ At the very least, their ignorance that the Spirit has come (19:2)²²⁴⁷ separates them from the Christian movement's spread after Pentecost.

Paul's question in 19:3, based on their lack of knowledge in 19:2, might assume the baptismal formula of Matt 28:19, and/or might prepare for the greater (Spirit) baptism John announced (Luke 3:16). Apparently those

²²⁴³ With, e.g., Hull, *Spirit in Acts*, 182; Tannehill, *Acts*, 232–33; Chrysostom, *Catena on Acts* 18.26–27; Ammonius, *Catena on Acts* 18.25; Didymus the Blind, *Catena on Acts* 18.28. Note also the likeliest understanding of Rom 12:11, and that the concern for those lacking the Spirit (Acts 8:15–16; 19:2) does not surface in Apollos's case.

²²⁴⁴ With Talbert, *Acts*, 166; Parsons, *Acts*, 260. The antifeminist Western text switches the name order here (see B. Witherington, "The Anti-feminist Tendencies of the 'Western' Text in Acts," *JBL* 103 [1, 1984]: 82–84)! For her teaching here, cf. Reimer, *Women*, 210–11; Arlandson, *Women*, 145–46.

²²⁴⁵ Paul later reminds the Corinthians that he himself should not need these (2 Cor 3:1–3).

²²⁴⁶ Cf. Luke 7:18; 9:54; 11:1. In support of historical tradition here, see Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 130–32; cf. also Haya-Prats, *Believers*, 16–17.

²²⁴⁷ Even apart from Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; they cannot mean they are unaware that the Holy Spirit *exists* (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10–11; CD 2.12; 5.11; 1QS 3.7; 8.16; 9.4; 1QHa 8.30; 15.9; Wis 9:17). See further Hull, *Spirit in Acts*, 110–11.

already baptized under John (Acts 19:3) who received Jesus's greater baptism in the Spirit (1:4–5; Luke 3:16) did not require rebaptism (many of Jesus's first disciples and Apollos), but those who had not yet received the Spirit (like those here) did. Ephesus offered many potential sites for baptism.²²⁴⁸

It seems likely that a movement or group of John's followers also persisted in Ephesus and elsewhere.²²⁴⁹ Disciples could prove very zealous in promoting their own teachers, often leading to strife with disciples of other teachers;²²⁵⁰ this probably happened between Jesus's and John's disciples at times (cf. John 3:26). Luke has emphasized Jesus's superiority to John as early as his infancy narratives (cf. Luke 1:80; 2:40, 52).²²⁵¹

Laying on hands apparently precipitates receiving the Spirit here (19:6); this combination could follow (8:12, 17) or precede baptism (9:17–18).²²⁵² Prophesying (19:6) reflects a key feature and purpose of Spirit-empowerment (2:17–18). As in 2:4 and 10:45–46, tongues also signifies reception of the Spirit (19:6), especially by signifying empowerment for cross-cultural mission (1:8). Without downplaying individual experience (cf. 4:8; 9:17; 13:9), Luke's narrative emphasizes corporate experiences with the Spirit (in subsequent history, cf., e.g., the Moravian Pentecost of 1727 or some experiences in the Great Awakenings).

That *about twelve* receive the Spirit (19:7) might recall the original Twelve in Jerusalem, showing geographic and temporal continuity in the work of the Spirit. God's people in every place need the Spirit for mission (1:8; 2:39); deficiency in this empowerment requires correction (8:15–16; 19:2–6).

²²⁴⁸ The Selinus River (Strabo 8.7.5; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.31.115) and baths (A. Bammer, "Ephesus," *OEANE* 2:252–55 [254]).

²²⁴⁹ Cf. Keener, *John*, 388–91.

²²⁵⁰ See Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.9; Suetonius, *Tib.* 11.3; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.8.490; 1 Cor 3:4–6; Winter, *Left Corinth*, 35–40; Winter, *Philo and Paul among Sophists*, 184–86; S. M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBLDS 134; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 175; Witherington, *Corinthians*, 130.

²²⁵¹ Against those who associate John of Ephesus with the Baptist, there was a real John the Baptist (see esp. J. P. Meier, "John the Baptist in Josephus: Philology and Exegesis," *JBL* 111 [2, 1992]: 225–37; R. L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-historical Study* [JSNTSup 62; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991]), and no need to conflate Johns, given the commonness of that name.

²²⁵² S. Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (BZNW 133; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 155–56; D. J. McCullough, *Ritual Water, Ritual Spirit* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2017), 215–16.

19:8–12: TEACHING AND SIGNS IN EPHEBUS

Repeatedly in 19:8–20, the Lord's true message spreads (19:10, 17, 20). As Luke drew on Athens' reputation for philosophy in 17:18–34, here he draws on Ephesus's reputation for both education (cf. 19:9) and magical spells (19:13–16).

In 19:8–12, Paul's ministry shifts from a synagogue intellectual venue to a more cosmopolitan one, with an even greater ministry of signs than before. Whereas some circles today focus on intellectual apologetics to the exclusion of supernatural power and vice versa, Paul readily brought the two together.²²⁵³

Foreign cults abounded in Ephesus,²²⁵⁴ including a Jewish community.²²⁵⁵ As usual, Paul begins with the synagogue; whereas some synagogues reacted with hostility (13:45; 17:2–5) and others more graciously (13:5; 17:11, 17), in this synagogue the initial receptivity of many but growing antagonism of others eventually divides it (18:19–20; 19:8–9; cf. 18:4–8).

Paul finds a more neutral venue (19:9) that attracts a wider range of gentiles. Following the model of Greek philosophers widely respected in Ephesus, Paul speaks as a Christian sage, exposing Jews and Greeks alike to his message. Ephesus hosted some philosophy (Lucian, *Phil. Sale* 13) and was a center of rhetoric (Tacitus, *Dial.* 15.3).²²⁵⁶ Many rhetoricians in Ephesus were high-status officeholders.²²⁵⁷ Paul may have rejected the world's wisdom (1 Cor 1:19–25; Col 2:8), but he was happy to contextualize (1 Cor 9:20–21), and Christians could appear like a philosophic school to outsiders.²²⁵⁸ Paul's letters include elements that would have been at home in

²²⁵³ Cf. Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 2:4–5; 2 Cor 10:4–5; 11:6; 12:12; Gal 3:2–5; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:13; C. Keener, "A Spirit-Filled Teaching Ministry in Acts 19:9," pages 46–58 in Alexander, May, and Reid, *Trajectories*. The ancient combination of sage with miracle-worker apparently became dominant especially later, possibly partly under Christian influence. Cf. Tiede, *Figure*, 99; C. R. Holladay, "Theios Aner" in *Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (SBLDS 40; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 237; E. V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus* [SBLDS 64; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982], 173; Kee, *Miracle*, 37, 297–99).

²²⁵⁴ *I. Eph.* 1213, 1230, 1231, 1232; J. C. Walters, "Egyptian Religions in Ephesos," pages 281–309 in Koester, *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia*.

²²⁵⁵ *CIJ* 2:13–14, §§745–47; *I. Eph.* 4.1251; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.39; Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesos," 122–27; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 143–48; Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 37–51; Barclay, *Jews in Diaspora*, 259–81; R. Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (BZNWK 80; New York: de Gruyter, 1996), 192–99.

²²⁵⁶ See further Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 126–27; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:85.

²²⁵⁷ Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 127–28.

²²⁵⁸ Stowers, "Resemble Philosophy," 81–102; Alexander, "IPSE DIXIT," 107. See discussion at 17:19–20.

Stoic (e.g., Rom 1:20; 2:14–15; 1 Cor 6:12; 8:5–6; 12:12) and sometimes Platonic (2 Cor 4:16–18) circles.²²⁵⁹ That Paul charged no fees (20:33–35) probably proliferated his influence.

The term for *lecture hall* here often referred to schools,²²⁶⁰ often in a hall used for lectures and rhetorical practice.²²⁶¹ *Tyrannus* was either the landlord or the building's usual orator during regular hours;²²⁶² this could be his name²²⁶³ or a nickname ("tyrant"), perhaps for a difficult teacher.²²⁶⁴ Possibly he was among Paul's benefactors (cf. Acts 19:31).²²⁶⁵

Whereas the Spirit prevented Paul from entering Asia prematurely (16:6), now Paul's message spreads to all Asia (19:10, 17, 20), to both Jews and Greeks (19:10, 17; cf. 14:1; 18:4; 20:21; Rom 3:9; 1 Cor 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13).²²⁶⁶ *All the residents of Asia* might be hyperbole (Acts 19:10, 17; cf. Luke 2:1; 6:17–19), but such hyperbole was widely understood,²²⁶⁷ including by Paul's enemies (Acts 17:6; 19:27; 24:5), and the gospel did spread widely (Col 1:23) in the region (cf. 1 Cor 16:19; 1 Pet 1:1; Rev 2–3). Travelers spread rumors and news quickly.²²⁶⁸ From cosmopolitan Ephesus Paul could send out more indigenous local workers to reach the surrounding region (cf. Acts 19:10; Col 1:7; 2:1; 4:12–13).²²⁶⁹ Paul's contacts with earlier churches also continued during this time (1 Cor 5:9; 16:1, 17–18; 2 Cor 11:28; 12:14; 13:1).

²²⁵⁹ See esp. Malherbe, *Paul and Philosophers*; C. S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016). For possible pedagogic diatribe style, cf. S. K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans* (SBLDS 57; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 18; Tobin, *Rhetoric in Contexts*, 93–103.

²²⁶⁰ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 648; Johnson, *Acts*, 339.

²²⁶¹ See Pliny, *Ep.* 2.3.6; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.10; Tacitus, *Dial.* 10.

²²⁶² Cf. morning lectures in Lucian, *Tim.* 54; teaching grammar in mornings and declaiming in afternoons (Suetonius, *Gramm.* 4); instructing disciples in mornings and crowds in afternoons (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.16). The Western text suggests that Paul lectured, probably after morning labor (cf. 20:34), from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

²²⁶³ In Ephesian inscriptions, see Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 121; Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 144.

²²⁶⁴ Some professors of rhetoric berated and beat unprepared students (Libanius, *Anecdote* 3.7).

²²⁶⁵ Another benefactor's recommendation could also help secure property (Pliny, *Ep.* 1.24.1–2).

²²⁶⁶ See also Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 140–45.

²²⁶⁷ Cf., e.g., Ovid, *Tristia* 2.324; Statius, *Theb.* 6.249–54; Lucian, *Alex.* 2; with respect to Ephesus or Asia, Cicero, *Flacc.* 6.14; Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.1.

²²⁶⁸ E.g., Pindar, *Nemean* 5.2–3; Justin, *Epit.* 2.14.8–9; 20.3.9; Cicero, *Quint. fratr.* 1.1.1; Plutarch, *Cam.* 24.1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.46; 14.58; *Hist.* 4.12.

²²⁶⁹ For disciples often propagating their teachers' message, see, e.g., Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 108; 110.14, 20; *Yeb.* 3.1; *Mek. Pisha* 1.135–36; *Sipre Deut.* 48.2.6.

Possibly Luke hints at Paul's maturation in, or at least fluctuation in, signs (Acts 13:9–11; 14:3; 19:11–12; 28:8–9), as perhaps with Jesus's first disciples (cf. Luke 9:40–41). This passage seems to recall the level of miracle-working experienced in Acts 5:12–16, which also included intermediary means (5:15; cf. Luke 8:44–46). Signs were important in Paul's evangelism (2 Cor 12:12; Rom 15:19; cf. 1 Cor 1:22).

Long-distance healing was considered especially powerful (cf. Luke 7:7–10). The *handkerchiefs or aprons* might refer, as many think, to Paul's work aprons and sweat-cloths (cf. Acts 20:34), perhaps taken without Paul's knowledge (cf. 5:15; Luke 8:44), although the terms have wider usage.²²⁷⁰ Objects to mediate miracles appear in biblical tradition,²²⁷¹ and Luke quickly distinguishes these events from pagan practice (19:13–20).²²⁷²

19:13–20: MAGIC INFERIOR TO PAUL'S SIGNS

Luke's treatment of Paul's signs in Ephesus (19:11–20) thus concludes like his treatment of Paul's intellectual ministry (19:8–10): the Lord's message spreads through the province of Asia (19:10). The message's spread (19:10, 20) thus frames the spectacular account of 19:11–20. Yet even here, power encounters that challenge religion's vested economic interests will breed hostility (19:23–29; cf. 16:18–19).

Luke does not equate all signs of superhuman power (19:17–19; cf. 8:9–11; 13:6–11). Paul's miracles in 19:11–12 are antithetical to mere magic and the spirits on which it typically depended. The abject failure of some who attempt to imitate his method without his power (19:13–16) contrasts mere magical manipulation with the true Lord's name (19:15). Secret names, such as (effectively) the publicly unpronounced name of YHWH,²²⁷³ would be considered especially powerful.²²⁷⁴ It thus sometimes appears in magical

²²⁷⁰ R. Strelan, "Acts 19:12: Paul's 'Aprons' Again," *JTS* 54 (1, 2003): 154–57, suggests Paul's lecture garment.

²²⁷¹ E.g., Exod 7:20; Num 17:5–10; 2 Kgs 2:13–14; 4:29; 13:21; for modern examples, cf. Parsons, *Acts*, 278–79; Keener, *Acts*, 3:2842 n. 5397.

²²⁷² On which, see, e.g., Valerius Maximus 2.5.6; G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 63.

²²⁷³ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 2.276; in the third century CE, *CIJ* 2:69–70, §821. This was probably originally to prevent hearers from using it lightly (so p. y. Yoma 3:7).

²²⁷⁴ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 64; cf. today M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 95. For other secret deity names, cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.68.3; Pliny, *Nat.* 28.4.18–19.

texts,²²⁷⁵ and Jewish adjurations sometimes resemble Greco-Egyptian ones.²²⁷⁶

In 19:13–16, Sceva's sons try to use Jesus's name as a magical formula, as others invoked powerful spirits to cast out lower spirits.²²⁷⁷ They quickly discover that Jesus's name cannot be manipulated like spirits' names;²²⁷⁸ Jesus's name authorizes his true agents,²²⁷⁹ and in the "spiritual" world, Jesus and his servant Paul are well known (16:17; Luke 4:34; 8:28).²²⁸⁰ This leads to honoring *the name of the Lord Jesus* (19:17).²²⁸¹ When his agents are faithful, spiritual power encounters reveal the true God's supremacy (Gen 41:8; Exod 7:10–12; 8:18–19; 9:11; Dan 2:27–28; 4:7–9, 19–28; 5:8, 17–28).

Exorcists and magicians sometimes requested spirits' names;²²⁸² here, by contrast, the demon ironically demands their identity²²⁸³ and drives them out (Acts 19:15). The exorcists want to cast out the demon; instead, the demonized man casts out the exorcists (19:16). This passage illustrates a theology of power encounter earlier borrowed from Q in Luke 11:15–26; Satan does not really cast out Satan (11:17–18).²²⁸⁴

²²⁷⁵ E.g., *CIJ* 1:517, §717; 1:523, §724; 2:90–91, §849; 2:217, §1168; *Incant. Text* 20.11–12; *PGM* 3.145–50. Some supposed permutations of YHWH, however, are simply the seven vowels used in Egyptian hymns (Demetrius, *Style* 2.71). For later magical exploitation of Jesus's name, see, e.g., *PGM* 3.420; 4.1231–36; 83.14–15.

²²⁷⁶ Cf. R. Lesses, "Speaking with Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjurations," *HTR* 89 (1, 1996): 41–60. For adjuring (cf. *orkizô* in 19:13) spirits, see, e.g., *PGM* 1.80–81.

²²⁷⁷ Incantation Text 3.8–9; 50.7–8; *T. Sol.* 2:4; 5:5, 9; 8:5–11; 11:5; 18; cf. Garrett, *Demise*, 106; Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 252–53; C. A. Faraone, "New Light on Ancient Greek Exorcisms of the Wandering Womb," *ZPE* 144 (2003): 189–97; R. Leicht, "Mashbia' Ani 'Alekhā: Types and Patterns of Ancient Jewish and Christian Exorcism Formulae," *JSQ* 13 (4, 2006): 319–43.

²²⁷⁸ Magical exorcism often privately invoked the names of higher spirits, in contrast with Christians' public use of Jesus's name; cf. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 204–5.

²²⁷⁹ Not necessarily apostles, but those with faith in Jesus's name (Luke 9:40–41, 49–50; cf. *t. Hul.* 2:22–23).

²²⁸⁰ Cf. Moses in the later *Sipre Deut.* 305.3.3.

²²⁸¹ Cf. the honoring of Solomon's name through success in exorcism (Josephus, *Ant.* 8.49). Believers in Asia understand that Jesus's name surpasses every name that is invoked (Eph 1:21).

²²⁸² Cf. Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30; *T. Sol.* 5:2, 5:6–7; *PGM* 1.160–61, 167–72.

²²⁸³ Denying knowing a person was often an insult or repudiation (cf. Mark 14:71; Luke 13:25; *T. Sol.* 3:2).

²²⁸⁴ Cf. Keener, *Spirit*, 103–9; Garrett, *Demise*, 36; Shauf, *Theology*, 224.

Luke 11:15–26	Acts 19:13–16
Exorcists	Exorcists
Your sons (Greek, 11:19) ²²⁸⁵	Sons of Sceva, a Jewish elite priest (19:14)
Assumption that Jesus uses more powerful spirits to drive out lower ones (11:15)	Assumption that Paul uses a more powerful spirit to drive out lower ones (19:13)
Jesus expels spirits by God (11:20) ²²⁸⁶	Paul casts out spirits by Jesus's name (19:13, 17)
Demons recognize Jesus (4:34)	Demons recognize Jesus (19:15)
False exorcism risked more harm than good (11:24–26)	False exorcism risked more harm than good (19:16)

Scaeva is a Latin cognomen; while some members of Jerusalem's priestly aristocracy may have been Roman citizens (even equestrians), Latin names would be more common in the Diaspora, especially in the west,²²⁸⁷ and some Jews in the region were Roman citizens.²²⁸⁸ If Scaeva headed a guild of exorcists, they might be his disciples rather than his literal sons. Roman priesthoods, in contrast to those in the Greek east, formed colleges or brotherhoods of priests.²²⁸⁹ On a narrative level, Luke might be glad to link Sceva with Jerusalem's chief priests (4:6), but many suspect that Sceva's "sons" might exploit the claim to high priesthood fictitiously.²²⁹⁰

Whereas demons caused another demoniac to go naked (Luke 8:27) and gave him supernatural strength (8:29), here the demon's strength strips the exorcists.²²⁹¹ (Various cultures sometimes associate spirit possession with

²²⁸⁵ The number of Sceva's sons probably matches that of the spirits in Luke 11:26 only by coincidence, since they are unsuccessful, not paralleled with spirits, and Luke 11:26 actually implies a total of eight.

²²⁸⁶ In Luke and probably Q, by God's "finger," probably evoking Exod 8:19: magicians could not match God's power.

²²⁸⁷ The cognomen could mark a Roman citizen, but we would need his nomen to be certain (Hemer, *Acts in History*, 234).

²²⁸⁸ See Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 169; Barclay, *Jews in Diaspora*, 271.

²²⁸⁹ *OCD*³ 1245.

²²⁹⁰ Cf. Juvenal *Sat.* 6.544–45, albeit probably Juvenal's fiction. Freelance Egyptian priests acquired a reputation for magic (D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998], 226, 234, 236–37), and Ephesians greatly respected "high priests" (S. van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus* [NovTSup 83; Leiden: Brill, 1996], 101–7).

²²⁹¹ Cf. Luke 4:33–35, where Jesus expels a demon in a synagogue, after Jesus himself is cast out of a synagogue and town (4:28–29).

strength²²⁹² or violence.)²²⁹³ Although the spirit expels the attempted exorcists, it essentially admits that it would submit to Jesus and Paul.

The term translated *awestruck* recalls its same use (translated *fear*) with respect to ministries of Jesus (Luke 7:16) and Peter (Acts 5:11).²²⁹⁴

Being *itinerant*, the *exorcists* in 19:13 might not be from Ephesus. Their Jewishness²²⁹⁵ contrasts them with Paul, the true preacher of Jewish monotheism (cf. 19:26, 33); like 13:6–8 (cf. 8:9–11), this may counter Jewish accusations that Christian signs represent sorcery; “by whom,” Luke asks, “do your own sons cast them out?” (Luke 11:19).

Many who believed Jesus now abandoned the remnants of magic (19:18; cf. Acts 8:19–23). Although many note that *confessed and disclosed their practices* fits technical language for divulging their spells,²²⁹⁶ the terminology also has a broader sense. Many practitioners *burned* their magical books *publicly* (19:19). Scholars often link these *books* in Ephesus with *Ephesia grammata*, i.e., “Ephesian writings.”²²⁹⁷ These *grammata* were not books but might be among the formulas found in such books; they were simply magical terms, spoken as charms or inscribed in amulets.²²⁹⁸ Their name reportedly derives from them being found on Artemis’s statue in Ephesus; despite no exclusive link with Ephesus, their title suggests such an association.²²⁹⁹

²²⁹² B. Kaplan and D. Johnson, “The Social Meaning of Navajo Psychopathology and Psychotherapy,” pages 203–29 in Kiev, *Magic, Faith, and Healing*, 208; J. M. Murphy, “Psychotherapeutic Aspects of Shamanism on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska,” pages 53–83 in *ibid.*, 58; Field, “Possession,” 5; S. Betty, “The Growing Evidence for ‘Demonic Possession’: What Should Psychiatry’s Response Be?” *JRelHealth* 44 (1, Spring 2005): 13–30 (16, 20); T. Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 125.

²²⁹³ E.g., Eliade, *Rites*, 71; Gelfand, “Disorders,” 165, 170; Schmidt, “Psychiatry,” 145; Kaplan and Johnson, “Psychopathology,” 227.

²²⁹⁴ Cf., e.g., LXX Exod 15:16; 1 Sam 11:7.

²²⁹⁵ For Jewish magical practices and Acts 19, see helpfully C. E. Arnold, “Sceva, Solomon, and Shamanism: The Jewish Roots of the Problem at Colossae,” *JETS* 55 (1, 2012): 7–26 (10–19).

²²⁹⁶ Practitioners had to keep spells secret; “divulging” them stripped them of their power (cf. *PGM* 1.192–94; Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 233; Klauck, *Context*, 230).

²²⁹⁷ E.g., C. C. McCown, “The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief,” *TPAPA* 54 (1923): 128–31; F. V. Filson, “Ephesus and the New Testament,” *BA* 8 (3, 1945): 73–80 (78).

²²⁹⁸ C. E. Arnold, *Ephesians – Power and Magic* (SNTSMS 63; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 15–16; Trebilco, “Asia,” 314; F. Graf, “Ephesia Grammata,” *BNP* 4:1023.

²²⁹⁹ Graf, “Ephesia Grammata”; cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 157. Some question the sufficiency of the evidence linking the texts with Ephesus (G. Mussies, “Artemis,” pages 91–97 in *DDD*, 95, suggesting a different derivation for the expression, and noting that iconography does not support the inference of Pausanias the lexicographer in the second century

Magical papyri²³⁰⁰ contain many of the same curse formulae found in *defixiones*, lead tablets inscribed with curses intended to harm others.²³⁰¹ Diaspora Jews sometimes warned against magic books: "Make no potions, keep away from magical books [*magikôn biblôn*]" (Ps-Phocyl. 149; OTP).

Israelites had long burned idolatrous objects (Deut 7:5, 25; 1 Chron 14:12); gentiles burned books to suppress their contents (e.g., 1 Macc 1:56).²³⁰² Christians might sell most kinds of possessions to care for the needy (2:45; 4:34), but cursed possessions, with clearly pagan associations, were under the ban and to be destroyed (Deut 7:26; 13:17; Josh 6:17–18). In contrast to nearly all other ancient examples, however, no censors seize and destroy others' works here; at great cost to themselves, the owners voluntarily destroy their own books.²³⁰³ Subsequent Christian conversion accounts have often followed this example.²³⁰⁴ The cost here is sometimes estimated at fifty thousand days' wages for an average worker, or a year's wage for 137 workers.²³⁰⁵ This sacrifice of those truly devoted to God contrasts with the cynical business calculations of the silverworkers in 19:25.

Bridging Horizons: Nonsupernatural Christianity?

In many cultures, people seek help from whatever spirits can provide them, unless embracing the sharp demands of monotheism.²³⁰⁶ Western missionaries often taught a theological system void of supernatural power, in contrast to local pre-Christian concerns.²³⁰⁷ Once locals reappropriated a

CE). Most of these texts were probably produced in Egypt, but most scholars still think that the verbal link with Ephesus was significant (Klauck, *Magic*, 101).

²³⁰⁰ Such as early examples in PGM 16; 20; 111; 117; 122; some terms were unintelligible to the users (Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 254–56).

²³⁰¹ R. E. Harder, "Defixio," *BNP* 4:175–78 (175–76).

²³⁰² Livy 40.29.11–14; Valerius Maximus 1.1.12; 1.1. ext. 7; Seneca, *Controv.* 10. pref. 5–7; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.19.6; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.35; 14.50; Diogenes Laertius 9.52; commentators also cite C. A. Forbes, "Books for the Burning," *TAPA* 67 (1936): 114–25.

²³⁰³ Trebilco, "Asia," 315.

²³⁰⁴ See, e.g., Pothén, "Missions," 189; fetishes in Keener, *Miracles*, 846 n. 407, 847, 848 n. 419, 850 n. 433, 851 n. 438, 851 n. 443.

²³⁰⁵ Haenchen, *Acts*, 567; Schnabel, *Acts*, 799. For Luke's critiques of money made in magic and religion, cf. Acts 3:6; 8:20; 20:33; Luke 9:3; 12:41; 22:5.

²³⁰⁶ Cf., e.g., Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 277; R. Tikopia, *Ritual and Belief* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1967), 295, 303; P. Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 110–13.

²³⁰⁷ On failure to engage local traditions of power leading to syncretism, see T. Ranger, "Medical Science and Pentecost: The Dilemma of Anglicanism in Africa," pages 333–65 in *The Church and Healing* (ed. W. J. Sheils; Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 364–65; cf.

Christian conception of signs and wonders, indigenous Christianity often flourished.²³⁰⁸ The relative weakness of supernatural engagement in Western Christianity stems from the radical Enlightenment's bulwark against supernaturalism,²³⁰⁹ not from Western Christianity's earlier theological heritage.²³¹⁰ ****

19:21–22: PLANS FOR JERUSALEM AND ROME

Whereas some of Paul's movements earlier in Luke's narrative may suggest Rome as a goal, it now becomes explicit. Paul does not end up in Rome only by mistake, any more than Jesus ended up in Jerusalem by mistake on passion week. The brief notice in 19:21–22 prepares for Paul's Roman custody in chs. 21–28, just as Luke 9:51–52 prepares for Jesus's passion in Jerusalem.

As 1:8 asymmetrically sets out the key geographic program for the book as a whole, so 19:21 sets out the geographic program for chs. 20–28: Macedonia and Achaia (20:1–4), Jerusalem (21:15–23:30), and Rome (28:16–31). Revisiting earlier churches (here in Macedonia and Achaia) fits the pattern of Paul's ministry elsewhere, both in Acts (14:21–23; 15:36; 16:4–5) and in Paul's letters (1 Cor 4:18–21; 16:3–7; 2 Cor 12:20–13:2; 1 Thess 2:17–18; 3:1, 5, 10–11). Paul planned to then visit Jerusalem (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 1:16) and after that Rome (Rom 1:11, 13; 15:23–25, 31–32; cf. 2 Cor 10:16).

Some contend that Paul resolves on this itinerary in his spirit (cf. 17:16), but most recognize that Luke's theology and usage strongly favor "by the Spirit," i.e., God's Spirit (19:21). That Paul *must* (Greek *dei*) *see Rome* is probably the language of divine necessity, as usually in Luke-Acts.²³¹¹ Paul can endure the Spirit's warnings about Jerusalem (20:22–23; 21:4, 11) because he knows that this destiny belongs to the Spirit's mission. Yet

discussion in P. G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," *Missiology* 10 (1, Jan. 1982): 35–47 (39).

²³⁰⁸ See sources in Keener, *Miracles*, 1:209–358.

²³⁰⁹ Cf., e.g., Burns, *Debate*; R. B. Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Keener, *Miracles*, 1:107–208.

²³¹⁰ For Christianity's supernatural heritage, see, e.g., Kelsey, *Healing*; Gardner, "Miracles"; Young, "Miracles"; Kelhoffer, "Christians"; Porterfield, *Healing*; Opp, *Lord for Body*; H. D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860–1900* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Keener, *Miracles*, 1:359–425.

²³¹¹ See esp. Tannehill, *Acts*, 239; C. Burfeind, "Paulus muss nach Rom: Zur politischen Dimension der Apostelgeschichte," *NTS* 46 (1, 2000): 75–91.

ultimately the Spirit of mission (1:8; 8:29; 10:19; 13:2–4; 16:6–7) now points Paul beyond Jerusalem to the heart of the empire.

As Jesus sent messengers ahead of him (Luke 9:52a; cf. also Luke 10:1; 19:29; 22:8; perhaps 3:4) once he set his face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), so Paul sends messengers on ahead to prepare his way (19:22). The messengers are Timothy (cf. 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10–11) and Erastus. If this is the high-status Corinthian Erastus of Rom 16:23, he may have even been an *aedile*²³¹² in Corinth for one year.²³¹³

19:23–34: RIOT IN EPHEBUS

Luke emphasizes that Paul's conflicts in Ephesus, as elsewhere, stemmed from external hostility to his message, not from any seditious activity on Paul's part (24:5). Paul's monotheistic message appears as a threat only because his message is spreading.²³¹⁴ Luke's presentation here fits a familiar pattern in Diaspora Jewish apologetic: if the Jewish community's opponents could be shown responsible for the riot, authorities would reaffirm Jewish rights.²³¹⁵

Metalsmithing (19:24) was deemed lowly,²³¹⁶ though probably less so in Ephesus's rising economic class.²³¹⁷ Luke highlights here information of

²³¹² For some debate about the precise office, see J. K. Goodrich, "Erastus, *Quaestor* of Corinth: The Administrative Rank of ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως (Rom 16.23) in an Achaean Colony," *NTS* 56 (1, Jan. 2010): 90–115; idem, "Erastus of Corinth (Romans 16.23): Responding to Recent Proposals on His Rank, Status, and Faith," *NTS* 57 (4, Oct. 2011): 583–93; A. Weiss, "Keine Quästoren in Korinth: Zu Goodrichs (und Theißens) These über das Amt des Erastos (Röm 16.23)," *NTS* 56 (4, Oct. 2010): 576–81.

²³¹³ For discussion, see, e.g., Theissen, *Setting*, 75–83; D. W. J. Gill, "Erastus the Aedile," *TynBul* 40 (2, 1989): 293–301; Winter, *Welfare*, 180–96; Goodrich, "Erastus"; cf. 2 Tim 4:20. Still, the name was not particularly uncommon (J. J. Meggitt, "The Social Status of Erastus [Rom. 16:23]," *NovT* 38 [3, 1996]: 218–23), and not all factors favor identifying the two figures (S. Friesen, "The Wrong Erastus: Ideology, Archaeology, and Exegesis," pages 231–56 in *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* [ed. S. J. J. Friesen et al.; *NovTSup* 134; New York: Brill, 2010]).

²³¹⁴ Analogously, much opposition to Judaism in Rome stemmed precisely from Jewish success in attracting Roman converts.

²³¹⁵ R. F. Stoops, "Riot and Assembly: The Social Context of Acts 19:23–41," *JBL* 108 (1, 1989): 73–91 (73, 79), citing Philo, *Embassy* 335–36; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.244–46; 16.58–60; 19.284; *War* 7.107–11. Despite his pro-Jewish apologetic, Josephus concedes the justice of punishing a Jewish community when they initiated the conflict (*War* 2.487–98; Stoops, "Riot," 80). But Stoops thinks that Luke has merely edited an anti-Jewish riot (74–75, 81).

²³¹⁶ Polybius 26.1.1–3; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.9; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 360.25–27.

²³¹⁷ See, e.g., *I. Eph.* 2212; P. T. Crocker, "Ephesus: Its Silversmiths, Its Tradesmen, and Its Riots," *Buried History* 23 (4, 1987): 76–78; Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 114–16.

apologetic value in his milieu: rabble-rousers of low station bypassed the courts (19:38) and used ignoble means to cause trouble for a respectable sage (19:9). This required intervention from a member of the “respectable” class (19:35) that supported Paul (19:31).

Ephesus had a guild of silversmiths;²³¹⁸ Demetrius²³¹⁹ belongs to this, while specializing in making shrines (19:24). Ephesians washed, dressed, and carried Artemis statues in many festival processions.²³²⁰ Ephesus produced many miniature shrines of Artemis (with the goddess statue inscribed), especially of terra cotta.²³²¹ Those made of silver (19:24) were rarer and more expensive.²³²²

Members of various trades typically lived and worked in particular sections of town,²³²³ so Demetrius could easily gather fellow metalworkers. In Ephesus, the silversmiths’ shops were situated on what was later called Arcadiane Street (*I. Eph.* 547), the street that ran from the theater (19:29) to the harbor.²³²⁴ Local associations of artisans often lobbied or used patrons to apply political pressure to protect their business interests in a city.²³²⁵ Sometimes guilds even led to civic unrest (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21–23).²³²⁶

Fitting his status as a metalworker, Demetrius’s speech betrays limited rhetorical sophistication beyond its opening line, and its agendas suit what ancient audiences expected from demagogues. Nevertheless, whereas the city clerk will end Demetrius’s riot by rightly declaring the innocence of Paul’s companions (19:35–41; cf. 17:5–9; 24:5, 12), Demetrius ironically takes

²³¹⁸ Horsley, “Inscriptions of Ephesos,” 142–43; Crocker, “Silversmiths.” They are linked with the temple in *I. Eph.* 636.9–10 (Trebilco, “Asia,” 341), with one even among the temple’s wardens (*I. Eph.* 2212.a.6–7; Trebilco, “Asia,” 336). Cf. a copper worker among Paul’s enemies in Ephesus (2 Tim 4:14).

²³¹⁹ One Demetrius is attested as a temple warden, probably in the mid- or late first century CE (*I. Eph.* 1578a). Since twelve of these were appointed annually and a silver worker could hold the position (*I. Eph.* 2212.a.6–7), Demetrius’s likely wealth (Acts 19:24) and popularity as defender of the cult could have later earned him this position. Demetrius is, however, a common name.

²³²⁰ Strelan, *Artemis*, 74.

²³²¹ Also terra cotta statuettes of Artemis; R. Fleischer, *Artemis von Ephesos und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien* (ÉPROER 35; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 27–34.

²³²² Cf. the marble one in Trebilco, “Asia,” 336; silver statuettes of Artemis (Deissmann, *Light*, 112–13).

²³²³ See MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 69–73, 129–35; Neh 3:8, 11; comment on Acts 18:3.

²³²⁴ Baugh, “Paul and Ephesus,” 98.

²³²⁵ MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 74–76.

²³²⁶ See Trebilco, “Asia,” 338–42. For specifically metalsmiths stirring trouble, see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.8–9.

the threat of Paul's faith more seriously.²³²⁷ Paul did not desecrate temples (19:37; Rom 2:22), but he did preach against idols (Acts 14:15–17; 17:24–25, 29)! Unknown to Luke himself, Paul's movement ultimately *would* supplant the worship of Artemis.²³²⁸

Ephesus was known for its imperial cult,²³²⁹ but most distinctively for its particular version of Artemis (19:27–28),²³³⁰ whom they deemed a “savior” (*I. Eph.* 1255, 1265). Given the bulbous appendages on her statue,²³³¹ scholars traditionally understood her as an Anatolian fertility or mother goddess. Whatever these signified in an earlier period, however, literary sources betray no fertility associations with the Ephesian Artemis in this period. She remains, rather, the Greek virgin huntress.²³³²

Artemis's temple in Ephesus, known as the Artemision, was famous half a millennium before Paul²³³³ and long afterward.²³³⁴ An inscription from about 44 CE labels it the supreme adornment of the province of Asia.²³³⁵ It had 127 marble columns, 60 feet high and over 6 feet thick; 36 of them were sculptured and overlaid with gold (Pliny, *Nat.* 36.21.95). Apart from Jerusalem, no city in the eastern empire had a temple comparable to it; it was roughly “four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens,”²³³⁶ and was listed among the seven wonders of the ancient world.²³³⁷

²³²⁷ Tannehill, *Acts*, 243–44.

²³²⁸ Christians later even erased her name from some inscriptions (e.g., *I. Eph.* 7, 1.3263.7–9; 2.508, 509).

²³²⁹ E.g., Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 30–37; Strelan, *Artemis*, 98–105. Its pantheon was traditional, including, e.g., Zeus (*I. Eph.* 1239–1241), Apollo (*I. Eph.* 1203), Asklepios (105; 1253–54); Dionysus (106; 1211; 1267–68; 1270); and so forth.

²³³⁰ Herodotus 1.26; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.55; Xenophon, *Eph.* 2.11; 3.5; R. Oster, “The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity,” *JAC* 19 (1976): 24–44; Baugh, “Paul and Ephesus,” 32–37; C. M. Thomas, “At Home in the City of Artemis: Religion in Ephesus in the Literary Imagination of the Roman Period,” pages 81–117 in Koester, *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia*, 85–98; Strelan, *Artemis*, 37–46.

²³³¹ Polemical Christian sources understood these as breasts (they hang down like udders; cf. Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.20.18 on Isis); others construe them as bulls' genitalia, eggs, or, more plausibly, bee eggs or a beehive (related to old Ephesus) or fruits such as a grape cluster.

²³³² Trebilco, “Asia,” 319–20; Strelan, *Artemis*, 45, 72, 90–91; cf. Achilles Tatius 6.21.2; Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.2; earlier, Strabo 14.1.23; Pliny, *Nat.* 16.79.213–15. Ephesus had been a Greek city for many centuries (Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.3.4; Menander Rhetor 1.2, 355.16–17; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.5.574).

²³³³ See, e.g., Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.3.12; Livy 1.45.2.

²³³⁴ Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.22.4 (van der Horst, “Macrobius,” 227); Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.8; Lucian, *Icar.* 24; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.2. On this temple, see more fully see Strelan, *Artemis*, 68–76.

²³³⁵ Trebilco, “Asia,” 323, citing *I. Eph.* 17–19, especially 18b.1–3.

²³³⁶ Trebilco, “Asia,” 322–23.

²³³⁷ Scherrer, “Ephesus: History,” 1025; Grant, *Gods*, 28.

The Artemision (19:27) controlled far more wealth and land than any other entity in Ephesus.²³³⁸ Its finances, however, were a sensitive issue at this time. Roughly a decade earlier, in 44 CE, the proconsul criticized it for inappropriate expenditures from Artemis's treasury, including selling priesthoods to the highest bidder regardless of hereditary nobility.²³³⁹ Artemis's devotees thus must zealously guard the temple's reputation.

Challenging vested economic interests stirred hostility (16:19), perhaps especially in cultic settings (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.9–10), as here (Acts 19:27a).²³⁴⁰ Paul challenges shrines (17:24) and silverworkers who make idols (Acts 17:29). Yet by adopting the polemical language of his deities' monotheistic critics, Demetrius's own words convict him: no pagan intellectual would have described miniature shrines (or even statues) as gods themselves, certainly not in the pejorative language of "gods made with hands" (cf. 7:41, 48; 17:24)!

Demetrius's hyperbolic claim that not only Asia but also all *the world* worshiped the Ephesian Artemis (19:27) reflects the wide spread of the cult of the specifically Ephesian version of Artemis.²³⁴¹ In the second century CE, a geographer speaks of "all cities" worshiping her (Pausanias 4.31).²³⁴²

Luke's other use of the expression translated *were enraged* (19:28) depicts a lynch mob seeking to kill Jesus (Luke 4:28–29). Mob scenes were part of hellenistic urban life,²³⁴³ sometimes even starting in public assemblies.²³⁴⁴ A leader could shout an acclamation then picked up by crowds (cf. Lucian, *Alex.* 38); acclamations could be spontaneous, or could be formulaic as in

²³³⁸ Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 39–42; Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesus," 143; P. Scherrer, "The City of Ephesus from the Roman Period to Late Antiquity," pages 1–25 in Koester, *Ephesus, Metropolis of Asia*, 8–9. Like other temples, it was also a bank (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.54–55).

²³³⁹ Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesus," 148; M. Horster, "Living on Religion: Professionals and Personnel," pages 331–41 in *A Companion to Roman Religion* (ed. J. Rüpke; Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 331.

²³⁴⁰ Cf. similar later reactions against Muhammad (A. Guillaume, *Islam* [New York: Penguin, 1956], 31), Luther (O. Chadwick, *The Reformation* [Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1964], 46–48; C. Bergendorff, *The Church of the Lutheran Reformation: A Historical Survey of Lutheranism* [St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1967], 37–41), or Prophet Braide (L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983], 181–83).

²³⁴¹ See Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesus," 153–55. Earlier, see Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.3.12. For the cult's deliberate spread, see Strabo 4.1.4.

²³⁴² Paul may have been exposed to it in Corinth; see Pausanias 2.2.6; 7.2.6–7.

²³⁴³ MacMullen, *Enemies*, 163–92.

²³⁴⁴ Cf. Cicero, *Flacc.* 17–19 (Strelan, *Artemis*, 152); Josephus, *War* 7.47–57; *Life* 279; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.47–49.

the cultic acclamation here.²³⁴⁵ Shouting in unison, as here, “was often political and could be arranged through guilds.”²³⁴⁶ Acclamations often included *Great is* (Acts 19:28); because Ephesians knew the acclamation, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” (Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.11), once the crowd caught the rhythm they could chant in unison. After two hours of such cries (19:34) the crowd would be in a frenzy.

Silversmiths apparently worked near the agora, in a busy business district that ran between the harbor and theater.²³⁴⁷ The crowded Commercial Agora²³⁴⁸ began some 50 meters south of the theater’s south end on Marble Street, or just 250 meters from the harbor-to-theater street, simplifying recruiting crowds. *Rushed together* in 19:29 recalls the mob that murdered Stephen in 7:57 (Luke uses *rushed* for mad violence also in Luke 8:33). Many might assume that this was an emergency meeting of the city assembly (cf. 19:32); “impromptu” gatherings occurred in theaters (e.g., Philo, *Flacc.* 41; Chariton, *Chaer.* 8.7.1), reportedly including Ephesus.²³⁴⁹ Accusations sometimes escalated into mass violence in theaters.²³⁵⁰ But even when crowds lacked the official right to gather, when they gathered in theaters they “often behaved as though they were meeting in assembly,”²³⁵¹ and insistent, mass shouting often got its way.²³⁵² The theater was also used during festivals honoring Artemis.²³⁵³

Ephesus’s theater was its official meeting place (cf. 19:39). Assemblies (19:32) in free cities often used theaters to gather and decide issues (cf. 19:39).²³⁵⁴ The highest estimates of the theater’s seating would accommodate only a quarter of Ephesus’s estimated residents, although it may have accommodated most of its citizens (i.e., male, free, and Greek) able to

²³⁴⁵ See Aune, *Dictionary*, 1.

²³⁴⁶ Stoops, “Riot,” 87 (following MacMullen, *Enemies*, 170, 339 n. 10); cf. L. L. Welborn, *Politics and Rhetoric in the Corinthian Epistles* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 12–13.

²³⁴⁷ *I. Eph.* 547. The street between harbor and theater was 1,700 feet (500 meters) long; the street itself was 36 feet (11 meters) across (Finegan, *Apostles*, 163–64).

²³⁴⁸ It was 360 feet (110 meters) on each of its four equal sides, surrounded by shops (Finegan, *Apostles*, 163).

²³⁴⁹ Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.10; Trebilco, “Asia,” 349.

²³⁵⁰ Philo, *Flacc.* 41, 84, 95, 173, in Stoops, “Riot,” 84. Theaters could also be used for officially sanctioned violence (Suetonius, *Jul.* 10.1; *Calig.* 27.1; *Claud.* 34.1–2; *Nero* 12.1), as Paul well knew (1 Cor 4:9, using *theatron*; 15:32).

²³⁵¹ Stoops, “Riot,” 84 (citing MacMullen, *Enemies*, 171–72).

²³⁵² Judge, *Pattern*, 26–27.

²³⁵³ Finegan, *Apostles*, 158.

²³⁵⁴ Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.4.3–4. In Ephesus, see Hemer, *Acts in History*, 121 (OGIS 480.8–9; *I. Eph.* 28.9–10, 19–20; 29.19–20).

vote. Most estimate its seating capacity at twenty-four thousand or twenty-four thousand, five hundred, with three tiers each including twenty-two rows, although it may be closer to twenty thousand in this period (it was still being expanded).²³⁵⁵

After accusers seized two of Paul's associates (19:29; cf. 6:12; 17:6), Paul *wished to enter and speak* (19:30); he would always embrace an opportunity to preach Christ (cf. 21:39–40). Providentially, others prevent him (19:30–31). (Since some considered fleeing dishonorable, noting the urging of others might guard his honor; cf. 9:25, 30; 17:10, 14.)²³⁵⁶ *Disciples*, probably Ephesian believers who understood the danger, prevented him, presumably for his safety (cf. 21:4, 12).

The *officials*, Paul's "friends" (19:31), may have different concerns. As Paul's "friends," they are probably his patrons,²³⁵⁷ sponsors of his public teaching activity.²³⁵⁸ Luke recognizes the social demands of "friendship" (cf. Luke 7:6; 11:5–8; 14:10–12; 23:12); patrons and clients, or benefactors and beneficiaries, were called each others' friends.²³⁵⁹

Friendship was generally conditional, entailing expectations.²³⁶⁰ In return for benefaction, benefactors expected public honor; for Paul to be associated with this riot or with charges of subverting Artemis's honor would have diminished their honor, so they urge him not to enter a confused (19:32) assembly already primed for hostility (cf. 19:33–34).²³⁶¹ Reciprocity conventions morally obligated Paul to heed their insistence.

Still protecting their honor, these Asiarchs may have informed their fellow official, the city clerk (19:35), of the circumstances (19:37–38), soliciting his help to quiet the crowd while diplomatically omitting Paul's name publicly. Nevertheless, whatever their personal feelings for Paul, he was

²³⁵⁵ Scherrer, "Ephesus: History," 1026; Scherrer, "Ephesus from Roman Period," 8. At its completion, it was antiquity's largest theater.

²³⁵⁶ Cf. similarly Justin, *Epit.* 11.14.3; 12.6.15–16; 12.8.5–6.

²³⁵⁷ C. S. Keener, "Paul's 'Friends' the Asiarchs (Acts 19.31)," *JGRCJ* 3 (2006): 134–41. Paul would not accept formal patronage from a church (20:34; 1 Cor 9:1–18; 2 Cor 11:7–9; 12:13), but he may have accepted elite sponsorship for the rent of Tyrannus's facilities (Acts 19:9) or other costs associated with his ministry.

²³⁵⁸ For patronage for poets and similar figures, see P. L. Schmidt, "Circles, Literary," *BNP* 3:350–51.

²³⁵⁹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 1; Valerius Maximus 7.8.7; Martial, *Epig.* 3.36.1–3; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.32; 3 Macc. 5:26.

²³⁶⁰ Marshall, *Enmity*, 1–24.

²³⁶¹ See Keener, "Asiarchs," 135–39.

now too much of a political liability to merit further support. A quiet departure would be in everyone's interests (cf. 20:1, 16).²³⁶²

A Closer Look: Asiarchs' "Friendship"

Literally, the *officials* (19:31) are "Asiarchs," officials chosen from among the highest elite of Asia's cities for a yearly office; over half of known Asiarchs hail from Ephesus.²³⁶³ Other regions might name just one official per year, but Asia had several,²³⁶⁴ although because the title included former Asiarchs, Paul's friends here need not all hold the office presently.²³⁶⁵ It was the highest provincial office an Ephesian citizen could achieve.²³⁶⁶ Asiarchs participated in civic religious rites, and desire for honor generally motivated their public activities.²³⁶⁷

Ancient hearers would appreciate Paul knowing people of high status (as elsewhere, e.g., 13:12; 17:4, 12, 34; Rom 16:23). Some Asiarchs achieved Roman citizenship, but Paul's full name might identify his citizenship as prior to theirs.²³⁶⁸ As one of the city's more popular teachers (19:9–10, 17, 20), his popularity would have made him attractive as a special object of benefaction.²³⁶⁹ Cities expected Asiarchs to provide public benefactions, including supporting lectures and teachers.²³⁷⁰ The more adherents and admirers Paul had, the greater the honor from the larger number of people his benefactors would acquire.²³⁷¹

²³⁶² Cf. Rousseau's departure from France, "partly to avoid embarrassing his patrons" (C. Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought* [3 vols.; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1990], 1:297).

²³⁶³ Taylor, "Asiarchs," 256; Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesos," 137; cf. Strabo 14.1.42.

²³⁶⁴ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 90.

²³⁶⁵ Taylor, "Asiarchs," 258. Some held the office more than once (R. A. Kearsley, "The Asiarchs," pages 363–76 in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, 365–66).

²³⁶⁶ See Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 138–49.

²³⁶⁷ Against earlier views, however, Asiarchs and imperial priests were not coextensive (Kearsley, "Asiarchs," especially 366; "Asiarchs, *Archiereis*, and the *Archiereiai* of Asia," *GRBS* 27 [2, 1986]: 183–92).

²³⁶⁸ Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 155–56.

²³⁶⁹ Perhaps in addition to the fact that, being new, he was not already supported by other patrons. Those seeking office in Republican Rome would seek "friendship" with all the prominent people (Cicero, *Handb. Elec.* 29–30; Strelan, *Artemis*, 146). Popularity with the masses was no more stable and predictable then (when historians portrayed them as fickle, e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.29) than it often is in political opinion polls in democracies today.

²³⁷⁰ Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 154–55, citing e.g., *I. Eph.* 2065.

²³⁷¹ Observers evaluated people's status based on the retinues accompanying them (Tacitus, *Agr.* 40). Paul's impact in Ephesus in 19:10–20 is comparable to descriptions of Jesus's

Gentile benefactors did not mind supporting monotheistic (Jewish) projects so long as this support enhanced the donors' reputation as benefactors,²³⁷² and Paul presented an ethnically universalistic message that allowed access to Israel's high God without even becoming Jewish. ****

Shouting and even riotous behavior were common in civic assemblies.²³⁷³ That the mob *did not know why they had come together* (19:32; cf. 21:34; 23:6–9) provides humorous irony,²³⁷⁴ again reinforcing Luke's consistent portrait that Paul's enemies in Ephesus were demagogues and Paul was the scholar (cf. 19:9). But it also fits some other ancient assemblies,²³⁷⁵ and Christians apparently spread unhindered in Ephesus after his departure.

To gain a hearing from a noisy crowd, one had first to get their attention.²³⁷⁶ Such crowds did not always wait to hear the attempted speakers out (Polybius 1.69.10–13), especially if they expected disagreement.²³⁷⁷

In 19:33 (as in 17:5–6; 18:17) Luke presupposes some information missing to us. Alexander was a common name, both among Greek-speaking Jews (cf. 4:6), as here, and among all residents of Ephesus.²³⁷⁸ Ephesus guaranteed rights to Jewish practice,²³⁷⁹ a situation that local Jews would not want disturbed.²³⁸⁰ Their primary interest as a minority community was tolerance of their customs, not converting (or risking offense to) polytheists. Paul the outsider²³⁸¹ had split Ephesus's synagogue, and once its remnant

"entourage" in the Gospel, which can be understood in patronal terms (see deSilva, *Honor*, 135).

²³⁷² With, e.g., Trebilco, "Communities," 568; Meeks, "Aliens," 131; cf. Luke 7:5.

²³⁷³ See Trebilco, "Asia," 350.

²³⁷⁴ Bruce, *Commentary*, 400; Pervo, *Profit*, 61.

²³⁷⁵ Nepos 3 (Aristides), 1.4; Josephus, *Life* 280.

²³⁷⁶ Xenophon, *Anab.* 2.2.19–20; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.15.4; 9.48.1. For relevant gestures, see Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 52–54, 140–50.

²³⁷⁷ Diodorus Siculus 18.67.1–4; Livy 3.49.4; Pliny, *Ep.* 9.13.19–20. Contrast unanticipated disagreement in Diodorus Siculus 13.19.6–13.20–27.

²³⁷⁸ E.g., *I. Eph.* 17.68; 597; 898.3, 4; 1977a; 1987; 2018; 3031; 3429 (the full list consumes nearly three full columns in the index of *I. Eph.* [vol. 8.2, pp. 9–10]); cf. "Alexander, son of Alexander" (*I. Eph.* 614.18; 1020.7).

²³⁷⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 12.125–26; 14.221–30, 262–64; 16.167–68, 172–73.

²³⁸⁰ Archaeological evidence suggests that Jews there were not very distinctive, but integrated into the broader society (Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 81–86), achieving significant status there (89–94).

²³⁸¹ Foreign Jewish behavior sometimes stirred anger against local Jewish communities (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81–84).

discovers the riot's alleged cause (19:26), they seek to dissociate themselves from Paul's missionary version of monotheism.

Ironically, however, the plan backfires. Knowing that Jews did not believe in Artemis (cf. *Sib. Or.* 5.293–94), the uninformed audience (Acts 19:32) assumes that Alexander's attempted *defense* (19:33) implies his community's guilt (19:34). Like a similar anti-Jewish backlash in 18:17, this one contributes toward explaining the charge in 24:5. It also undoubtedly informs the hostility in 21:27–28.

A Closer Look: Historical Information in Acts 19:23–41

Luke plays the events of this section for all they are worth dramatically, but he does not invent them.²³⁸² Inventing a riot would hurt his apologetic for Paul (cf. the later accusation in Acts 24:5); if anything, he tones the opposition down. By embarrassing Paul's supporters (19:31), the riot might require his strategic departure; mere danger to his life would not do so (1 Cor 15:30–32; 16:8). Nor was this Paul's first experience of severe hostility in Ephesus (20:19; 1 Cor 15:30–32; 2 Cor 1:8–10).²³⁸³

Given Luke's apparent lack of as much information here as in the "we" sections, the accuracy of his local details²³⁸⁴ also goes beyond what we would expect for pure invention. For example:

1. On other occasions Ephesus aggressively defended the Artemis cult.²³⁸⁵
2. Asia Minor's cities had many riots and much unrest in this period.²³⁸⁶

²³⁸² See Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 157–69; *pace* Haenchen, *Acts*, 576–79. Cf. further Conzelmann, *Acts*, 164–65; P. Lampe, "Acta 19 im Spiegel der ephesischen Inschriften," *BZ* 36 (1, 1992): 59–76; R. Selinger, "Die Demetriosunruhen (Apg. 19,23–40): Eine Fallstudie aus rechtshistorischer Perspektive," *ZNW* 88 (3–4, 1997): 242–59; J. R. Edwards, "Archaeology Gives New Reality to Paul's Ephesus Riot," *BAR* 42 (4, 2016): 24–32, 62.

²³⁸³ Some propose an Ephesian imprisonment (cf. Rom 16:4 with 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23; G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929]; H. Omerzu, "Spurensuche: Apostelgeschichte und Paulusbriefe als Zeugnisse einer ephesischen Gefängenschaft des Paulus," pages 295–326 in Frey et al., *Apostelgeschichte im Kontext*, 295–314). It is certainly possible, but beyond confirmation (cf. Thrall, 2 *Corinthians*, 116–17).

²³⁸⁴ See F. Millar, *The Roman Empire and Its Neighbours* (New York: Dell, 1967), 199, cited in D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf, "Preface," pages ix–xiii in Gill and Gempf, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, xiii. Some contend that Luke covertly highlights God's superiority to Artemis (C. L. Brinks, "'Great Is Artemis of the Ephesians': Acts 19:23–41 in Light of Goddess Worship in Ephesus," *CBQ* 71 [4, 2009]: 776–94).

²³⁸⁵ *I. Eph.* 1a.2; Trebilco, "Asia," 326–31; Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesos, 155–56.

²³⁸⁶ Trebilco, "Asia," 338; in the empire generally, see B. Kelly, "Riot Control and Imperial Ideology in the Roman Empire," *Phoenix* 61 (1–2, 2007): 150–76.

3. Economic concerns for the temple were of special concern in this period (cf. 19:25).
4. Luke's titles for Artemis fit local Ephesian usage (19:27, 37).²³⁸⁷
5. The silversmiths' shops (19:24–25) may have been located on the road from the harbor to the theater (or perhaps near the busy market), and (even more likely) were relatively close to the theater (19:29).
6. Whereas the term translated *town clerk* had a wide semantic range, it was the precise designation for Ephesus's city clerk (19:35).

By the standards of Paul's own lists of sufferings (1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:8–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–27), Luke's account is fairly mild; he does not recount the half of Paul's troubles!²³⁸⁸ Given Luke's apologetic considerations, it is far more likely that he *toned down* the repercussions of the incident than that he created it.²³⁸⁹ Despite Luke's concise survey of most of Paul's two years in Ephesus and decision to focus on a particularly dramatic scene, he is well aware that Paul faced prior opposition there (20:19). ****

19:35–41: THE CITY CLERK DEFENDS PAUL

Luke welcomes reasoned defenses of toleration for Jesus's movement (5:35–39), as here. Paul faces mobs in 14:5, 19; 16:22; 17:5–8; authorities could accommodate mob pressure (16:22; 17:8–9) or protect people from it (21:32; cf. 18:14–16), as here.

The *town clerk* held one of the highest offices in cities of Roman Asia, with a staff of clerks under him; in Ephesus his position was even more dominant.²³⁹⁰ He was also the official with whom Demetrius and his followers should have first lodged their complaint.²³⁹¹ Some who held this yearlong office were former or future Asiarchs; Asiarchs (19:31) were among his peers. His position likely required him to function as the chief

²³⁸⁷ Masculine *theos* with a feminine definite article (19:37) predominated, with feminine *thea* often used in the precise phrase found in 19:27. See S. M. Baugh, "Phraseology and the Reliability of Acts," *NTS* 36 (2, 1990): 290–94.

²³⁸⁸ Cf. also Hanson, *Acts*, 195. Although elsewhere complaining that Luke adds adventure to dramatize the story, Pervo, *Profit*, 10, complains here that during the riot Paul is simply "sipping sherry with the high priests of the imperial cult." He rightly observes that Luke plays down the significance of Paul's conflict there by claiming that Paul was planning to leave anyway (19:21). Still, Paul *was* planning to leave eventually anyway (1 Cor 16:3–8).

²³⁸⁹ Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 164 (citing Pauline evidence); Dunn, *Acts*, 263; Johnson, *Acts*, 351–52. To keep to his point, a good historian was expected to know what to omit and what to treat in cursory fashion, as well as what to develop (Lucian, *Hist.* 6).

²³⁹⁰ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 86; Trebilco, "Asia," 351.

²³⁹¹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 87.

liaison between Ephesus's local government and the Roman proconsul, headquartered in the same city – which meant that he would be the official responsible to explain the riot to the provincial authorities (cf. 19:40).

People unwilling to listen to other residents (19:33–34) might nevertheless heed the city clerk gesturing from the platform (19:35).²³⁹² Naturally, the official's speech is rhetorically superior to Demetrius's.²³⁹³ Luke's audience would appreciate the apologetic value of the civic administration defending Paul against demagogues.²³⁹⁴ The substance of the speech would be a matter of public record (like the *précis* of any official's public speech), but Luke's source is likelier one of Paul's companions present (19:29), whom the narrator knew personally (20:4; 27:2; cf. Col 4:10, 14; Phlm 24).

Building rapport, the clerk first counters the accusation of 19:27 by appealing to common knowledge about Artemis's greatness;²³⁹⁵ her cult is in no danger (19:35–36). *Temple keeper* (19:35) translates a title frequent in Ephesus's inscriptions,²³⁹⁶ one that was later²³⁹⁷ applied to the city as guardian of the imperial cult. Here the official might epideictically reapply the semantic domain's original use for temple wardens of the Artemis temple²³⁹⁸ to the entire city. Alternatively, Ephesus, later called *temple keeper of Artemis*, may already bear this title, apparently attested within about a decade of the events depicted here.²³⁹⁹

Although many statues supposedly *fell from heaven*,²⁴⁰⁰ that this one was believed to have done so (19:35) fits neither surviving images of Artemis nor literary evidence. Tradition in fact attributed the original

²³⁹² Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 4.35; Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.20. *Be quiet* (19:36) is the same verb as *quieted* in 19:35 (only here in the NT); they need to remain in this state.

²³⁹³ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 132. E.g., in Greek, the sound of the verb translated *rash* (*propetês*; 19:36) rhetorically balances the verb translated *fell from heaven* (*diopetês*; 19:35).

²³⁹⁴ On the apologetic value of this speech, see Padilla, *Speeches*, 182–88.

²³⁹⁵ A philosophic observer implied that Ephesians took civic pride much too far (Heraclitus, *Ep.* 9).

²³⁹⁶ Ninety times or more, e.g., *I. Eph.* 21 I.3, 22, 41; 24 B 2; 27.4; 132; 143.36a–d; 212; 241; 233; 236.

²³⁹⁷ On this probable date, see S. J. Friesen, "The Cult of the Roman Emperors in Ephesos: Temple Wardens, City Titles, and the Interpretation of the Revelation of John," pages 229–50 in Koester, *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia*, 229–30.

²³⁹⁸ Trebilco, "Asia," 330; for humbler cultic senses, Johnson, *Acts*, 350.

²³⁹⁹ Friesen, "Cult," 231; Oster, "Artemis as Opponent," 30; Trebilco, "Asia," 329–30; *NewDocs* 6 (1992), 203–6, §30.

²⁴⁰⁰ E.g., the Palladium (Apollodorus, *Bib.* 3.12.3; *Epit.* 5.10; Lycophron, *Alex.* 363; Fronto, *Eloq.* 1.3), the Taurian Artemis (Euripides, *Iph. Taur.* 87–88, 977–78, 1384), Cybele (Appian, *Hist. rom.* 7.9.56), and others (Plutarch, *Lys.* 12.1–2; Pausanias 1.26.6); cf. also Kauppi, *Gods*, 101–5.

Ephesian Artemis image to the Amazons; her typical images were wooden and clearly formed by human hands (19:26). The clerk continues to establish rapport; when praising a statue, one could hyperbolically declare, "Perhaps this statue fell from heaven."²⁴⁰¹ Since Artemis fell from heaven, the clerk maintains, charges that anyone discredits Artemis as "made with hands" (19:26)²⁴⁰² are too baseless for Ephesians to take seriously! Within the narrative world, the clerk's audience might assent that, apart from hyperbole, *these things cannot be denied* (19:36). Luke's audience, however, will deem them quite deniable!²⁴⁰³

In 19:37, the clerk dismisses baseless assumptions, hyperbolically offering language even more extreme than Demetrius's (19:25–27). The point is: they have committed no crime worth circumventing the courts and acting in a riotous, disorderly manner that might invite the governor's retribution. A genuinely actionable offense such as sacrilege (cf. 24:6) could include even changing tradition or moving sacred objects, occasionally metaphorically described as temple robbing.²⁴⁰⁴ Actual temple robbery, of course, was a heinous and capital crime.

A Closer Look: Temple Robbers (19:37)

Conquerors were expected to leave sanctuaries untouched.²⁴⁰⁵ All Mediterranean peoples deemed impious destroying temples²⁴⁰⁶ or seizing objects from them.²⁴⁰⁷ Theft from a temple²⁴⁰⁸ was a heinous offense;²⁴⁰⁹

²⁴⁰¹ Menander Rhetor 2.17, 445.19 (trans. p. 223). For figurative usage, cf. Polybius 36.10.1–7.

²⁴⁰² Cf. Trebilco, "Asia," 353, noting the analogous claim that the symbol of Cybele, being from heaven, was not manmade (Herodian 1.11.1).

²⁴⁰³ Ancient hearers would not expect an unreliable character's words to reflect the author's perspective (Proclus, *Poet.* 6.1, K110.8–9).

²⁴⁰⁴ *I. Eph.* 27.217 (Trebilco, "Asia," 354); Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.88–89. Technically the charge applied only to stealing items devoted to deities (Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 31).

²⁴⁰⁵ Thucydides 4.97.2; Livy 36.20.3; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 8.12.89.

²⁴⁰⁶ E.g., Polybius 4.67.3; 5.10.3–4; 9.35.6; 16.1.2–6; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.8; Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.71–72; Quintilian, *Decl.* 257.4.

²⁴⁰⁷ Aeschines, *Embassy* 131; Livy 31.26.12; 31.30.9–10; 31.31.3; 42.3.8; Nepos 4 (Pausanias), 4.4; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 8.20.133; Quintilian, *Decl.* 252.5. Earlier, cf. Judg 18:17; D. Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (New York: KTAV, 1969), 202–3. Rome was protecting the sanctity of some others' shrines by the second century BCE (see J. Wells, "Impiety in the Middle Republic: The Roman Response to Temple Plundering in Southern Italy," *CJ* 105 [3, 2010]: 229–43).

²⁴⁰⁸ E.g., Strabo 4.1.13; esp. Nero (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.148; Suetonius, *Nero* 32; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44).

²⁴⁰⁹ E.g., Lucian, *Hermot.* 37; *Vit. Aes.* 127–28; even if caused by poverty (Quintilian, *Decl.* 379.5). Exceptionally, Diogenes the Cynic dissented (Diogenes Laertius 6.2.72–73).

those who committed it would then “battle against” deities.²⁴¹⁰ Those who listed perpetrators of particularly severe crimes frequently included temple robbers;²⁴¹¹ temple robbery even became a rhetorical commonplace for a severe offense.²⁴¹²

Most people believed that the gods avenged such insults,²⁴¹³ sometimes even by fire.²⁴¹⁴ Nevertheless, mortals also executed severe punishments for this crime;²⁴¹⁵ it was considered among the most serious of capital offenses.²⁴¹⁶ Cicero repeatedly denounces a corrupt governor for this impiety,²⁴¹⁷ invoking divine judgment (*Verr.* 2.1.3.7–8; 2.1.18.46–47), including through the court (2.5.72.184–89).

Artemis’s temple, once reportedly defended by Caesar himself (Caesar, *C.W.* 3.33, 105), was considered particularly inviolable, long famous as a sanctuary and place of asylum.²⁴¹⁸ Desecrating anything sacred to Artemis warranted death.²⁴¹⁹

Because of Jewish insistence on only one God, gentiles sometimes suspected them in particular of sacrilege against pagan shrines,²⁴²⁰ inviting Jewish apologetic.²⁴²¹ The genocidal slaughter of Egyptian Jewry in 116–117

²⁴¹⁰ Polybius 32.15.13; Diodorus Siculus 14.69.2; Justin, *Epit.* 2.12.8–10; Quintilian, *Decl.* 323.5.

²⁴¹¹ Xenophon, *Hell.* 1.7.22; Plato, *Euthyphro* 5; Diodorus Siculus 27.1; Cicero, *Quint. frat.* 1.1.8.25; *Fin.* 3.9.32; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.53; Lucian, *Z. Cat.* 16, 18; *Dial. D.* 450 (24/30, *Minos and Sostratus* 1); *Sat.* 7; *Sib. Or.* 2.14; cf. Luke 19:46.

²⁴¹² E.g., Hermogenes, *Progygn.* 6 (Commonplace), 12.

²⁴¹³ E.g., Polybius 31.9.1–4; 32.15.14; Diodorus Siculus 14.63.1; 14.69.4; 14.76.3; 27.4.3; Justin, *Epit.* 1.9.1–3; 24.8.9–16; 39.2.5–6; Nepos 17 (Agesilaus), 4.8; Valerius Maximus 1.1.18–21; 1.1. ext. 3; 1.1. ext. 5; Pliny, *Nat.* 33.24.83; Pausanias 3.23.3–5; 9.33.6; 9.39.12; 2 Macc 3:25–26; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.358–59.

²⁴¹⁴ Diodorus Siculus 16.58.6; Valerius Maximus 1.1. ext. 5; Pausanias 9.25.10; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12.523ab.

²⁴¹⁵ E.g., Livy 32.1.8; Arrian, *Alex.* 6.30.2; Quintilian, *Decl.* 331.5.

²⁴¹⁶ Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.62; *Apol.* 25; Seneca, *Controv.* 8.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.82; *Vit. Aes.* 128, 132; *P. Tebt* 5.5.

²⁴¹⁷ *Verr.* 1.2.4; 1.4.12; 1.5.14; 2.1.4.9; 2.1.20.54; 2.3.3.6; 2.4.13.30; 2.4.32.71; 2.4.43.93–94; 2.4.44.96–97; 2.4.46.103–4; 2.4.49.109–10; 2.4.56.126–2.4.60.134.

²⁴¹⁸ See especially Josephus, *Ant.* 15.89; Strabo 14.1.23; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 12.4.23; Thomas, “Home,” 98–106; Strelan, *Artemis*, 49–50, 70–71.

²⁴¹⁹ *I. Eph.* 2; Arrian, *Alex.* 1.17.11; cf. F. Sokolowski, “A New Testimony on the Cult of Artemis of Ephesus,” *HTR* 58 (4, 1965): 427–31.

²⁴²⁰ See, e.g., Rom 2:22; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.311, 318. For reasons, cf. Philo, *Embassy* 200–2; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.192–93, 248–49; earlier, D. Barbu, “The Jewish Sacking of Alien Temples: ‘Limits of Toleration’ in a Comparative Perspective,” *History of Religions* 50 (1, 2010): 21–42.

²⁴²¹ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.237; *Ant.* 4.207; cf. L. H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Asa,” *BBR* 4 (1994): 41–59.

CE stemmed in part from pagan oracles warning that the “impious” Jews would plunder Egyptian temples if not attacked first.²⁴²² ***

Paul’s colleagues are not *blasphemers of our goddess* (19:37). Paul presumably did not denounce deities specifically by name – though he, like other Jews, opposed idolatry (17:29). Following the LXX reinterpretation of Exod 22, Jewish apologists protested that they were not allowed to blaspheme pagan deities²⁴²³ (though among themselves they in fact mocked them relentlessly; see Wis 13:10–14:7; comment on Acts 14:15–17). God’s servants are accused of blasphemy (Acts 6:13–14; 21:28; Luke 22:65), but true blasphemy was that against God and his Messiah (12:10; 23:39; Acts 13:45; 18:6; 26:11).

Instead of stirring a mob, Demetrius ought to bring matters to court;²⁴²⁴ since courts favored people of status, Paul’s allies could protect him there (cf. 19:31). The proconsul or his deputies would hold court periodically in each of the nine district capitals in Asia, one being Ephesus; Rome’s representatives are in town (cf. 19:40). This is the only place where Luke uses *proconsuls* in the plural (13:7–8; 18:12); everyone in the empire knew that each province had only one, so this either refers to the special circumstances of late 54 to early 55 CE in Ephesus, where two or three persons acted in the murdered proconsul’s stead,²⁴²⁵ or is (more simply) a generalizing plural.²⁴²⁶

The term translated *assembly* (*ekklēsia*) often applied to civic assemblies,²⁴²⁷ often conducted in theaters²⁴²⁸ (19:29). Although Luke occasionally calls the mob an “assembly” (19:32, 41), he also calls it a “crowd” (19:33, 35). In 19:39, the clerk insists on a *regular* assembly, literally a “legal” one unlike the present one.²⁴²⁹ In principle and at worst, free cities could lose

²⁴²² See Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 206–7.

²⁴²³ Exod 22:27 LXX (ET 22:28); Philo, *Mos.* 2.205; *Spec. Laws* 1.53; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.207; *Ag. Ap.* 2.237; see P. W. van der Horst, “‘Thou Shalt Not Revile the Gods’: The LXX Translation of Ex. 22:28 (27), Its Background and Influence,” *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 1–8.

²⁴²⁴ Court was probably held in the state agora further east, across from the city hall (Trebilco, “Asia,” 309).

²⁴²⁵ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.1; Riesner, *Early Period*, 216–17.

²⁴²⁶ Cf. possibly the different term in Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.7; 45.4, 6, 8; 46.14.

²⁴²⁷ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.87.1; 7.17.2; 11.50.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21; 51.2; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.114; *War* 1.550, 666; 4.162, 255.

²⁴²⁸ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.6; 66.4, 29.

²⁴²⁹ Some plausibly contend that this was an originally legal (but not regularly scheduled) assembly that simply lost control (Sherwin-White, *Society*, 85–87), thus Luke’s terminology in 19:32, 41. Because one inscription in Ephesus suggests one regular assembly per month (*I. Eph.* 27.54), and John Chrysostom later suggests three

their free status (Pliny, *Ep.* 8.24.7); riotous behavior was the surest way to lose the privilege.²⁴³⁰ Publicly associating Demetrius with such risks would publicly shame him.

Instigators of riots could face harsh punishments;²⁴³¹ Ephesus could punish even the guild (19:24–25; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21), and the entire city could face reprisals,²⁴³² the concern here (Acts 19:40). Rome learned of all improper assemblies (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 46.14), and twice in the first century investigated matters surrounding the Artemisium itself.²⁴³³

The clerk's *we are in danger* (19:40) answers Demetrius's claim of *danger* (19:27, the term's only other use in Acts). Because Demetrius had failed to *bring charges* in the appropriate venue (19:38), the city could now be *charged* (19:40). The charge of *riots* (Greek *stasis*), wrongly leveled against Paul (24:5), properly belonged instead to his opponents (cf. 23:7, 10; Luke 23:19, 25). Whereas there was no rightful *cause* (*aitia*, *aitios*) for convicting Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14, 22; Acts 13:28) or Paul (Acts 22:24; 23:28; 25:18, 27; 28:18), there was no justifiable cause (*aitios*) for this mob's behavior (19:40). Unfortunately, the accumulation of enemies' charges from various locales was gradually building toward a potential case against Paul (21:28; 24:5).

20:1–6: ON THE MOVE AGAIN

Ephesus climaxes a phase of Paul's public ministry. From this point forward (20:1–28:31) Paul is on the way to Rome via Jerusalem (19:21), with his final voluntary journey in 20:1–21:17.²⁴³⁴ The transition here is not only geographic, but also from his accepted public ministry to his captivity (his "passion," so to speak).

assemblies in Ephesus per month (*Hom.* 42.2), these scholars suggest that Ephesus had one regular or sacred and two additional meetings a month.

²⁴³⁰ Trebilco, "Asia," 344–45; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.93. Rome was looking for excuses in this period to reduce such privileges (Sherwin-White, *Society*, 83–85).

²⁴³¹ Trebilco, "Asia," 344–45.

²⁴³² Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.39–40; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.17.

²⁴³³ Trebilco, "Asia," 342–43.

²⁴³⁴ Luke's Gospel arranged probably chronologically disparate material about Jesus's ministry around his final, fateful journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9–19). Paul likewise undertakes many journeys (the geographic details of which allow Luke a firmer chronology here), in 13:4–14:28; 15:36–18:1; 18:18–19:1, and the present one. The final involuntary journey will be the voyage to Rome in Roman custody in Acts 27:1–28:14, but it fits Paul's sense of God's calling as well (cf. 19:21; 25:11; 27:24).

The voyage includes a miracle (20:7–12); a summary of Paul’s central message to a church he had guided (20:18–35); and scenes of great affection for Paul (20:36–21:14). By narrating even Paul’s extended stays in 20:1–21:16 only briefly (especially 20:3), Luke creates another continuous journey account, interrupted with several noteworthy (or perhaps illustrative) events,²⁴³⁵ though only the speech is of significant length (20:18–35).

The first travel sequence, 20:1–16, is a chronological transition, kept as concise as possible, to return Paul to Ephesian believers (albeit not Ephesus) that he leaves in 20:1. Although Luke summarizes and often focuses independently on different events, where his itineraries overlap with Paul’s they agree.²⁴³⁶ He naturally omits Paul’s conflicts with the Corinthians and other details irrelevant to his interests.

Paul’s letters	Acts
Paul taught the “Galatians” about the collection (1 Cor 16:1)	Paul strengthened “the disciples” throughout Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)
Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8)	Paul’s ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20)
Many events while Paul is in Ephesus (1 Cor 1:11; 7:1; 16:8, 17; probably Paul’s second visit to Corinth in 2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:2), ²⁴³⁷ including both fruit and hostility\ (1 Cor 15:31–32; 16:8–9; 2 Cor 1:8–9)	Paul’s stay in Ephesus lasted over two years (19:8, 10; 20:31), spreading the gospel (19:10–20) and experiencing opposition (20:19; cf. 19:23–20:1)
Apollos is a strong preacher in Corinth and associated with Paul in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:12)	Apollos is associated with Ephesus and preached also in Corinth (Acts 18:24–28)
Paul plans to visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Macedonia (1 Cor 16:5), c. Then Achaia (1 Cor 16:5–6; cf. 4:18–21); d. Judea (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 1:16) e. and finally Rome (Rom 1:11–13; 15:23–25; cf. 2 Cor 10:16) 	Paul plans to visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Macedonia, b. Achaia, c. Judea, d. Rome (in that sequence; Acts 19:21)
While in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8) Paul sends Timothy to Corinth ahead of himself (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10); Timothy is later with Paul in Corinth (Rom 16:21)	While in Ephesus, Paul sends Timothy and a companion into Macedonia (Acts 19:21); Timothy is next mentioned leaving Corinth (or just possibly Macedonia) with Paul (20:3–4)

²⁴³⁵ For the alternation of travel and events, see Gaventa, *Acts*, 276. Travel legs provided necessary transitions between events in different locations.

²⁴³⁶ See Riesner, *Early Period*, 233; Witherington, *Acts*, 447–49.

²⁴³⁷ The voyage by itself may have taken over two weeks each way (see Cicero, *Att.* 5.12–13).

(cont.)

Paul's letters	Acts
Paul visits Macedonia (2 Cor 2:13; 7:5–7; cf. 1 Cor 16:5)	Paul visits Macedonia (Acts 20:1–2)
Despite his delay (2 Cor 1:16–17; 2:1), he plans to visit Corinth (2 Cor 13:1), with traveling companions from other cities (2 Cor 9:4)	Paul visits Achaia (Acts 20:2–3), and soon afterward travels with companions from various cities (20:4)
Paul finishes his collection in Macedonia and Achaia (Rom 15:26) and writes Romans from Corinth (Rom 16:1)	Paul in Achaia for three months (Acts 20:2–3)
After leaving Macedonia and Achaia (Rom 15:26), Paul presumably carried through his plan to visit Jerusalem (Rom 15:25)	Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17)
Jerusalem might prove dangerous (Rom 15:31); on the majority view, Paul's next letters (e.g., Philippians) are from Roman captivity	Paul is arrested in Jerusalem and detained by Rome's agents (Acts 22:24–23:30)
Paul apparently ends up in Rome, though not necessarily by the means he had planned (Phil 4:22; cf. Rom 15:23–24)	Paul uses his Roman citizenship to get his case transferred to Rome (Acts 25:10–12)

Despite opposition, Paul meets with the disciples before leaving Ephesus, as elsewhere in the face of conflict (14:20; 16:40). Luke, who all but skips the collection (24:17),²⁴³⁸ has little reason to emphasize a trip to Macedonia and Achaia (20:1–2) the focal point of which was the collection (Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 16:1–5; cf. 2 Cor 8–9).²⁴³⁹ Luke surveys a span of several months in two verses (20:2–3).

Paul travels north to Troas (2 Cor 2:12–13) and delays a promised trip to Corinth (1:17; 1:23–2:1). Finally Paul returns to Corinth in person (2 Cor 12:19–13:2; 13:10), now for his third visit (2 Cor 12:13; 13:1). Paul's three-month stay in Achaia was probably during winter (cf. 1 Cor 16:6), possibly as late as 56–57. Aquila and Priscilla have by then returned to Rome (Rom 16:3), after Claudius's death in 54 (cf. Acts 18:2).

²⁴³⁸ For various views of the collection, see the survey in D. E. Watson, "Paul's Collection in Light of Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor in the First-Century World" (PhD dissertation, University of Durham, 2006), 1–11, especially 2–5.

²⁴³⁹ Information about the collection would likely have been available to Luke (see J. E. Morgan-Wynne, "2 Corinthians VIII.18f. and the Question of a Traditionsgrundlage for Acts," *JTS* 30 [1, 1979]: 172–73).

Paul's plan to sail for Syria in 20:3 (cf. 21:3) should have placed him in Jerusalem for Passover, but the plot and consequent trip through Macedonia (20:3) change the schedule to Pentecost (20:6, 16). Before Passover, passengers voyaging from Corinth's eastern port Cenchrea could include some Achaian Jews whose hostility he had incurred earlier (18:6, 12). An "accident" would be simpler there than in Corinth surrounded by allies.

Plots (cf. 20:19) and conspiracies were common in this period;²⁴⁴⁰ that Paul is repeatedly warned of plots in time to escape them (also 9:24; 23:16) suggests divine protection (cf. Luke 4:29–30; 13:31). The land journey from Corinth back to Philippi (20:6) may have taken up to two weeks. Paul recruits respected traveling companions from various locales partly to provide credibility for the offering (1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 8:20–21); Luke, who virtually omits the collection (except Acts 24:17) probably underlines their geographic diversity instead. They represent some of the then-global uncircumcised church. It was also safer to travel in groups, especially for carriers of funds.²⁴⁴¹

Luke lists these representatives by province: Macedonia; Phrygia (Galatia); and Asia; affirming their unity with Jerusalem (Rom 15:26–27; cf. Isa 60:5, 11).²⁴⁴² *Sopater of Berea* (20:4) is apparently a Macedonian Jewish believer (Sosipater, Rom 16:21). Where one can determine from inscriptions, over 80 percent of persons named *Secundus* in Thessalonican inscriptions are Roman citizens.²⁴⁴³ *Aristarchus* worked closely with Paul (19:29; 27:2; Col 4:10; Phlm 24). *Gaius* was a common name; this one is from *Timothy's* region, differing from those named Gaius in Acts 19:29; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14. Tychicus and Trophimus (20:4; cf. 21:29) represent the church in Asia, from which Paul organized the collection (1 Cor 16:19). Trophimus was an especially popular name in the first century CE.²⁴⁴⁴

The narrator's "we" earlier left off in Philippi (16:16), and now picks up there (20:5–6; cf. similarly Philip in 8:40; 21:8). Voyages between Neapolis (Philippi's port) and Alexandria Troas (16:8–12) were conventional for

²⁴⁴⁰ E.g., Nicolaus, *Aug.* 19; Suetonius, *Claud.* 13; *Dom.* 2.3.

²⁴⁴¹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 128, cites Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1.69; Josephus, *War* 2.232, 515; *Ant.* 17.313; 18.122.

²⁴⁴² Well before the formal rise of area bishops, churches inherited a transnational sense of unity from Diaspora Judaism (Meeks and Wilken, *Antioch*, 27). Perhaps Paul or someone unnamed (such as Titus) represents Achaia (cf. Acts 20:3; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 8:6; 9:5), which surely participated (Rom 15:26).

²⁴⁴³ Riesner, *Early Period*, 350–51.

²⁴⁴⁴ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 236.

east–west travel.²⁴⁴⁵ *Days of Unleavened Bread* (20:6) is probably more than a chronological marker; Paul and others probably observed the festival,²⁴⁴⁶ though Luke might use its mention to foreshadow ominous events ahead (cf. 12:3–4; Luke 22:1–2). Because of prevailing spring winds, the voyage is much longer (*five days*, Acts 20:6) than the two days of 16:11 (three or four was average).

20:7–12: EUTYCHUS RAISED

Paul had apparently planted a church in Troas on his way into Macedonia (2 Cor 2:12); one host was apparently Carpus (2 Tim 4:13). In 20:7–12, despite limited space, Luke raises suspense for the outcome of Paul's journey by highlighting language from the passion and resurrection narrative:²⁴⁴⁷

- the first day of the week (Luke 24:1)
- the upper room (Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13)
- breaking bread (Luke 22:19; 24:30–35)

These features follow the days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6; cf. Luke 22:1–2).

Paul speaks long *on the first day of the week* not because it is Sunday (Luke probably depicts a Sunday evening gathering concluding Monday at dawn)²⁴⁴⁸ but because he has much to say²⁴⁴⁹ and intends *to leave the next day* (20:7). Breaking bread (emphasized in both 20:7, 11) establishes fellowship and characterized many Christian meetings in general, regardless of

²⁴⁴⁵ See W. M. Ramsay, "Roads and Travel (in NT)," 5:375–402, *Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. J. Hastings; 5 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898–1923), 384.

²⁴⁴⁶ Diaspora Jewish communities did observe festivals (*CIF* 2:36, §777). Paul did not deem them mandatory (Rom 14:5–6; Gal 4:9–10), but his churches knew of them (1 Cor 5:7–8; 16:8).

²⁴⁴⁷ Johnson, *Acts*, 358.

²⁴⁴⁸ Some scholars prefer Saturday evening to Sunday morning, but this is less likely. *Pace* those who find a new Christian sabbath here, Luke's roughly thirty uses of *sabbath* coincide with the Jewish sabbath (contrast later Ignatius, *Magn.* 9.1; *Barnabas* 15.8–9).

²⁴⁴⁹ Ancient orators could sometimes continue for seven hours or more (e.g., Seneca, *Controv.* 7. pref. 1; Pliny, *Ep.* 4.16.2–3; Tacitus, *Dial.* 19) although legal settings imposed limits (Cicero, *Brutus* 93.324; Tacitus, *Dial.* 38).

the day (Luke 9:16; 22:19; 24:30, 35; Acts 2:42, 46). This is one of Paul's many "sleepless nights" (16:25; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:27).

The *many lamps* (Acts 20:8) may emphasize the size of the meeting place and/or absolve the church from liability for Eutychus's fall.²⁴⁵⁰ Presumably Eutychus sits in the window because the room is crowded and probably therefore warm (even after sundown in April). Above the first floor, some windows were large, thick, and low enough to sit on.²⁴⁵¹ Multistory buildings were common in the most populous cities,²⁴⁵² where some Roman-style tenements had large windows.²⁴⁵³ In many tenements, many windows illuminated a long, central room,²⁴⁵⁴ which might have been used with cooperation from friendly neighbors.

Falling asleep during meetings was often deemed negligent,²⁴⁵⁵ though because people usually retired at sundown, *midnight* (20:7) is a mitigating factor (cf. positive characters in Luke 9:28, 32; 22:45–46). The problem here is falling asleep in an upstairs window! Luke recognizes that the young man was actually *dead* (Acts 20:9); Paul's *his life is in him* (20:10) simply deflects praise (cf. Luke 8:52). This resuscitation recalls those by Elijah, Elisha, Jesus (Luke 7:14–15; 8:54–55), and Peter (Acts 9:40):

- upper room (20:8): cf. 1 Kgs 17:19, 23; 2 Kgs 4:10–11, 21, 32–33; Acts 9:37
- in his arms (20:10): cf. 1 Kgs 17:21; 2 Kgs 4:34–35
- his life is in him (20:10): cf. 1 Kgs 17:23; 2 Kgs 4:36; Luke 8:52

The narrator is an eyewitness on this occasion (Acts 20:7); although he does not report any dramatic actions of Eutychus (cf. Luke 7:15; 8:55; Acts 9:40), everyone appears satisfied (20:12).²⁴⁵⁶

²⁴⁵⁰ Eutychus's name is not symbolic; it is the ninth commonest Greek name in Rome's inscriptions (337 times), dominant especially close to the first century (Hemer, *Acts in History*, 237).

²⁴⁵¹ See, e.g., Safrai, "Home," 734–35; Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses*, 24, 45, 104, plate 2; Blue, "House Church," 210. For large windows, see, e.g., Josh 2:15; 2 Kgs 9:30–33; Vitruvius, *Arch.* 6.3.9–10.

²⁴⁵² Cf. Clarke, *Houses*, 26; outside Rome, Strabo 16.2.23; Owens, *City*, 54; S. Mitchell, "Archaeology in Asia Minor, 1990–1998," *ArchRep* 45 (1998–99): 125–92 (138–39, 170); McRay, *Archaeology and NT*, 87–88.

²⁴⁵³ E.g., Robertson, *Greek & Roman Architecture*, 307–9.

²⁴⁵⁴ Stambaugh, *City*, 172–73; cf. Clarke, *Houses*, 27–28.

²⁴⁵⁵ E.g., Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.4; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.8.578; 1QS 7.10.

²⁴⁵⁶ For some subsequent eyewitness accounts of resuscitations in theologically pregnant contexts, see Keener, *Miracles*, 1:536–79.

20:13–16: FURTHER TRAVEL, AVOIDING EPHEBUS

While the itinerary may not much interest modern readers unfamiliar with the locations, it may well have interested educated readers in antiquity;²⁴⁵⁷ many works assumed educated audiences that would find their repertoire of geographic references (along with allusions to Greek history and legend associated with them) intelligible and interesting. Luke's itinerary is also accurate in its details, as we would expect in a prose historical work.²⁴⁵⁸

Assos (20:13) was lofty and strongly fortified (Strabo 13.1.57);²⁴⁵⁹ although just 20 miles south-southwest of Troas, by the winding coastal road it was 38 miles (61 km).²⁴⁶⁰ Mitylene (20:14) was self-sufficient (Strabo 13.2.2), the island of Lesbos's largest city. Its northern harbor was the better of its two harbors (Strabo 13.2.2) and the one undoubtedly used by Paul's south-bound ship.²⁴⁶¹ Most residents of the massive island of Chios clustered in its east, with several good harbors (Strabo 14.1.35).²⁴⁶² Rome granted Chios and Samos "free" status (i.e., limited autonomy; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.37.135–5.38.136). The city Samos (on the island of that name) faced south, as did its harbor (Strabo 14.1.14).²⁴⁶³ By the time the ship reaches Samos, it is already beginning to pass Ephesus (Acts 20:16). Miletus (20:15), one of Asia Minor's leading cities (Strabo 14.1.4),²⁴⁶⁴ had multiple good harbors (14.1.6). A significant Jewish community lived there (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.244–46), and probably some Jesus-followers as well (cf. Acts 19:10; 2 Tim 4:20).

Especially given the prevailing winds, a Miletus-bound cargo ship would bypass Ephesus with a direct route from Chios.²⁴⁶⁵ Ephesus hosted Asia Minor's largest harbor, but silting was causing trouble at this time.²⁴⁶⁶

²⁴⁵⁷ See, e.g., Cicero, *Att.* 5.12; cf. Marguerat, "Voyageurs"; Krasser, "Reading," 554.

²⁴⁵⁸ Contrast poetry (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 52.7) and mostly novels (Xenophon, *Cyr.* 5.4.51; Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.11).

²⁴⁵⁹ Cf. local fertility in Strabo 15.3.22; see further R. Merkelbach, ed., *Die Inschriften von Assos* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1976); M. Rose, "New Hope for a Forgotten City," *Archaeology* 61 (2, 2008): 36–39.

²⁴⁶⁰ Mark Wilson, personal correspondence, Nov. 25, 2011.

²⁴⁶¹ Further on Mitylene, see Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 80–83.

²⁴⁶² Further on Chios, see T. Corsten, ed., *Die Inschriften von Kios* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1985).

²⁴⁶³ Further on Samos, see Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 116–25.

²⁴⁶⁴ Cf. S. Mitchell, *Archaeology*, 151–54; Yamauchi, *Cities*, 115–27; Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 243–54.

²⁴⁶⁵ Versus hugging the coast of the long promontory between Smyrna and Ephesus.

²⁴⁶⁶ Finally dredged several years later in 62 CE (Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.23; Horsley, "Inscriptions of Ephesos").

Whether in the major harbors of Ephesus or Miletus, unloading a large ship's cargo dockside could take twelve days.²⁴⁶⁷

Waiting for messengers to reach Ephesus and for Ephesian elders to reach Miletus, however, could delay Paul four more days even if the elders (who may have had earlier notice) were free to leave immediately.²⁴⁶⁸ While hospitality obligations might have detained Paul longer in Ephesus,²⁴⁶⁹ most scholars think that Paul was no longer welcome (or perhaps safe) there. Under such circumstances, one's friends would travel to see one (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 19.1–2).

Adding up various figures in the narrative (20:6, 13–15; 21:1–4, 7, 10) and other factors, Paul should have reached Jerusalem by Pentecost, as planned (20:16). Hurrying to forestall potential obstacles at the beginning of the journey, they are able to travel less hastily toward the end.²⁴⁷⁰ Paul could impact the Jerusalem church more at Passover (cf. 20:3) or Pentecost, when pilgrims swelled Jerusalem; Pentecost, however, concluded the major spring festivals. Paul's gentile companions may have also felt safer among the Diaspora pilgrims. Nevertheless, the chronological notice of 20:16 also allows Luke to invite comparison between Peter's speech on Pentecost (2:14–40) and Paul's speech *near* Pentecost. On Pentecost the exalted Lord bestowed the Spirit to reach the gentiles (1:8), and now Paul brings representatives of gentile churches to meet their "mother" church (20:4–5).

20:17–27: FAREWELL TO EPHESIAN ELDERS

This speech warns leaders of the Ephesian church – and church leaders of Luke's own generation – to beware of greedy teachers who seek their own disciples (20:30) to exploit them (20:29, 33). By contrast, Paul's life becomes a model for sacrificial ministry (20:18–27, 33–35). Some compare the speech to a "testament," but these normally ended with the speaker's death.

²⁴⁶⁷ Rapske, "Travel," 31.

²⁴⁶⁸ Luke accurately reports the incident; he would not "voluntarily concoct the sort of problem we see here" (Barrett, *Acts*, 960).

²⁴⁶⁹ Rapske, "Travel," 17. Friends often insisted on visits (Fronto, *Ad Verum Imp.* 1.3; 1.4.1–2; 2 Cor 1:15–17), sometimes complicating departure (Judg 19:9–10; Luke 4:42–43; Apollonius Rhodius 1.861–64).

²⁴⁷⁰ See C. J. Hemer, "Observations on Pauline Chronology," pages 3–18 in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday* (ed. D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 9–10; Riesner, *Early Period*, 316.

More technically, it is a farewell speech (of which testaments are merely one type).²⁴⁷¹

Whatever Luke's literary adjustments, he surely draws on a real speech of Paul. Farewell speeches were common, and it is difficult to imagine that Paul would call together the elders and not address them. One might accuse Luke of inventing a speech in Ephesus, but there is little reason to invent one for Ephesian elders in Miletus.²⁴⁷² This, Luke's one Pauline speech to fellow believers and the first speech in the "we" material, closely matches Pauline language,²⁴⁷³ although for this Luke could also draw from his wider experience with Paul. Luke also appears to condense a larger speech from the occasion: e.g., an allusion to Ezek 34 (in Acts 20:28–29) may follow one to Ezek 33 (in Acts 20:26). Financial sacrifice (20:33–35) also fits a historical setting (Paul's collection for the Jerusalem church) not emphasized by Luke.

Speeches often introduced a primary theme toward the beginning,²⁴⁷⁴ and this one emphasizes Paul's example of sacrificial service (20:19).²⁴⁷⁵ That example informs Paul's ministry in Ephesus (20:20–21); his willingness to sacrifice his life in Jerusalem (20:22–25); and his approach to possessions (20:33–35). In the center of these examples, Paul exhorts the elders to carry forward this work (20:28, 31a).²⁴⁷⁶ Ministry themes repeat.²⁴⁷⁷ The speech may also sometimes evoke Jesus's mission discourse:

- Lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29)
- Ministry in houses (Luke 10:5; Acts 20:20)

²⁴⁷¹ On farewell speeches, see, e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.4, 393.31–394.4. I see this one as primarily deliberative (with Pervo, *Acts*, 518; Parsons, *Acts*, 291); but for epideictic elements, fitting many farewell speeches, see D. F. Watson, "Paul's Speech to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20.17–38): Epideictic Rhetoric of Farewell," pages 184–208 in *Persuasive Artistry* (ed. D. F. Watson; JSNTSup 50; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 197. Compare Jesus's farewell speech in W. S. Kurz, "Luke 22:14–38 and Greco-Roman and Biblical Farewell Addresses," *JBL* 104 (2, 1985): 251–68.

²⁴⁷² Barrett, *Acts*, 960; Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 175.

²⁴⁷³ C. J. Hemer, "The Speeches of Acts, 1: The Ephesian Elders at Miletus," *TynBul* 40 (1989): 77–85; Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 117–18; Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 177–80; esp. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle*, esp. 140–85.

²⁴⁷⁴ E.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436a.33–39; Seneca, *Controv.* 1. pref. 21; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.8.

²⁴⁷⁵ For oneself as an example, cf. Luke 22:20, 24–27; Seneca, *Dial.* 7.11.1; Musonius Rufus 9, p. 74.13–19; here, W. S. Kurz, "Narrative Models for Imitation in Luke-Acts," pages 171–89 in Balch, *Greeks, Romans, and Christians*.

²⁴⁷⁶ A leader's example and benefaction could exhort hearers to follow better (Arrian, *Alex.* 7.9.1–7.11.2; 1 Sam 12:3).

²⁴⁷⁷ Cf. serving, announcing, and testifying in the chiasm in Tannehill, *Acts*, 253.

- Preaching the kingdom (Luke 10:9; Acts 20:25)
- Paul no longer responsible (Acts 20:26; cf. Luke 10:6, 11, 16)

But Paul relinquishes the right to provision (Acts 20:34; cf. 1 Cor 9:12) reported in Luke 10:7–8.

This speech fits its ancient setting. The exhortation to shepherd God's church (20:28) may be the speech's primary thesis,²⁴⁷⁸ supported by Paul's example in the *narratio* (20:18–27) and explained and developed in 20:29–35.²⁴⁷⁹ Disciples might imitate teachers,²⁴⁸⁰ and self-praise was justifiable when used to provoke hearers to emulation.²⁴⁸¹

The leadership title *elders* (20:17) makes good sense in an early Jewish context (see comment on 14:23); Pauline churches included leaders, whatever the “titles” used in Paul's day (1 Cor 16:15–16; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12). Appealing to the knowledge of one's audience (Acts 20:18; 1 Thess 2:1–2) was a well-established rhetorical strategy.²⁴⁸² “Humility,”²⁴⁸³ “tears,” and “trials” underline Paul's emotional appeal, or rhetorical pathos.²⁴⁸⁴ Paul's letters attest his appeals to pathos (2 Cor 6:11–13; Gal 4:12–20) and that he sometimes wept even as he exhorted by letter (2 Cor 2:4; Phil 3:19).²⁴⁸⁵ Although Luke reports Jewish plots (9:23–24; 20:3; 23:12–15), he has not mentioned them in Ephesus. Paul, however, incurred hostility from some of the synagogue community there (19:9, 33–34; 21:27–29; 24:18–19), and Luke merely samples his opposition (1 Cor 16:8–9; 2 Cor 1:8–9).

²⁴⁷⁸ For 20:25 and 20:28, see J. J. Kilgallen, “Paul's Speech to the Ephesian Elders: Its Structure,” *ETL* 70 (1, 1994): 112–21.

²⁴⁷⁹ Speakers often established their *êthos*, or character. Speeches might elaborate in past (20:18–21), present (20:22–24), and future (20:25), as here; see Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 9 (Ethopoeia), 21–22; 10 (Ecphrasis), 22.

²⁴⁸⁰ E.g., Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.3; Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.2.26; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.21; Josephus, *Life* 11; *b. Ber.* 62a.

²⁴⁸¹ Plutarch, *Praising* 15, *Mor.* 544D.

²⁴⁸² E.g., Aeschines, *Embassy* 56; 122–23; *Tim.* 89; Isocrates, *Nic.* 46, *Or.* 3.36; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 22.

²⁴⁸³ When applied to leaders, this connotes gentle consideration; see esp. D. J. Good, *Jesus the Meek King* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

²⁴⁸⁴ On which, see Aristotle, *Rhet.* Bk. 2; Quintilian, *Inst.* Bk. 5; esp. T. H. Olbricht and J. L. Sumney, eds., *Paul and Pathos* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2001); in Acts 20, Keener, *Acts*, 3:3008–9, 3050–52, 3069–70.

²⁴⁸⁵ For tears moving an audience, see, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.18.3; Livy 1.26.12; 23.8.4; Cicero, *Sest.* 11.26; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.114.

Sages often valued speaking truth for the hearers' good, in contrast to flattery (Acts 20:20; 2 Cor 6:11; Gal 4:16).²⁴⁸⁶ Philosophers²⁴⁸⁷ and orators²⁴⁸⁸ used *helpful* or "profitable" (Acts 20:20) as a criterion for moral evaluation, as do Paul's letters from Ephesus in the mid-50s (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23; 12:7; 2 Cor 8:10; 12:1). In Acts 20:20, Paul taught both *publicly* (e.g., 19:8–10) and *from house to house* (i.e., privately; cf. 2:46; 5:42).²⁴⁸⁹ *Repentance* and *faith* (20:21) each continue elements of the gospel message emphasized throughout Acts (cf. *repentance* in, e.g., 2:38; 3:19; 17:30 and *faith* in, e.g., 10:43; 13:39; 15:7; 16:31).

Historically, Paul did anticipate trouble in Jerusalem (Rom 15:31), as here (Acts 20:22–23); Luke highlights the parallel to Jesus's expectation of suffering in Jerusalem (Luke 9:22; 13:33; 18:31). Like passion predictions in Luke's Gospel, advance warnings (Acts 9:16; 21:4, 11–14) apologetically prepare the reader for the otherwise politically embarrassing Roman custody, here of the gentile mission's leading figure (chapters 21–28).²⁴⁹⁰ Luke thereby shows that Paul's captivity was no accident or result of folly; rather, it was part of God's plan (cf. Acts 2:23). In this context, *captive* [lit., "bound"] *to the Spirit* (20:22) means something like, "bound, as the Holy Spirit testifies" (cf. 20:23; 21:11) and as the Spirit had guided him (19:21). Twice after this passage Luke illustrates the Spirit's means of testifying *in every city* (20:23), through prophecies foretelling what awaits Paul (21:4, 11; cf. 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7). Paul does not, however, know details beyond this suffering (Acts 20:22; cf. Phil 1:19–26; 2:17).

Paul will fulfill his calling regardless of the cost, even in the face of death (20:24; cf. Luke 9:23; 12:4; 14:26–27; 17:33; 1 Cor 15:31–32; 2 Cor 4:10–11; 6:9; 11:23; Phil 1:21; 2:17; 3:10–11). Ancient literature extolled courage, including

²⁴⁸⁶ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.2–3; Plutarch, *Profit by Enemies* 6, *Mor.* 89B; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.2.

²⁴⁸⁷ E.g., Plato, *Alcib.* 1.114–27; Philodemus, *Crit. frg.* 1.4; 47.7; col. 10b.10–11; 18b.1–2; 19a.3; 20b.8–9; 24a.4; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.21.69; Seneca, *Dial.* 7.8.2; *Ben.* 4.21.6; Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.5b2, pp. 14–15.22; 2.7.5d, pp. 28–29.17–29; 2.7.10a, pp. 56–57.26–27; 2.7.11h, pp. 74–75.23–24, 29–30; 2.7.11i, pp. 74–75.38.

²⁴⁸⁸ E.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.7.1, 1363b; *Rhet. Alex.* 1, 1421b.24, 28–30; 1422a.3–4, 5–16; 4, 1426b.32, 34; 4, 1427a.26–27; 6, 1427b.39–41; 1428a.1–2; 10, 1430a.27–28; 34, 1440a.1–2; 29, 1436b.10–11; Theon, *Progymn.* 8.45.

²⁴⁸⁹ The sage Crates reportedly entered one house after another to admonish those within (Diogenes Laertius 6.5.86).

²⁴⁹⁰ Other writers also unified plots by foretelling impending events (e.g., Virgil, *Aen.* 10.471–72, 503; in historiography, see Squires, *Plan*, 121–37; in Luke-Acts, 137–54).

enduring suffering and death bravely,²⁴⁹¹ especially in military contexts²⁴⁹² but also for sages.²⁴⁹³ Jewish sources naturally praised martyrdom.²⁴⁹⁴ To *finish my course* (Acts 20:24) is a running metaphor (cf. 1 Cor 9:24, 26; Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16; 3:12–14); see comment on Acts 13:25. Paul's good news about the kingdom (20:24–25) coheres with the message throughout Luke-Acts (8:12; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16).

Paul would not see them again (Acts 20:25, 38; cf. Luke 22:15–16, 18). Farewell speeches typically displayed sadness about parting from loved ones,²⁴⁹⁵ and might attribute one's departure to necessity.²⁴⁹⁶

Like Samuel giving way to a new leader (1 Sam 12:3), Paul recounts his innocence (Acts 20:26–27).²⁴⁹⁷ Paul here (and in 18:6) recalls especially Ezek 3:17–21 and 33:2–9: God holds responsible for a wicked person's death (*blood*) a sentinel, or watchman, who fails to warn them. Now, however, the Holy Spirit, who is sending him to Jerusalem (20:23), has passed on this responsibility of being watchmen to them (20:28).²⁴⁹⁸ Paul's description of them as shepherds of God's people in 20:28 carries forward the allusion to Ezekiel's context (Ezek 34:1–8).

20:28–35: BEWARE OF GREEDY PREACHERS

Although the largest part of the speech consists of Paul's example (20:18–27, 33–35), his example is meant to exhort the elders, who must carry on his ministry (20:28–32; Luke 12:35–48). Farewell speeches, especially in Jewish testaments, often include warnings.²⁴⁹⁹

Like Acts 20:17, 28, so also Tit 1:5–7 and 1 Pet 5:1–2 identify *overseers* with elders and shepherds. (Only in the second century do overseers as bishops

²⁴⁹¹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.68.2–3; *Rhet. Her.* 3.2.3; Cicero, *Inv.* 2.54.163; *Fin.* 3.19.64; Livy 5.46.2–3; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 66.50.

²⁴⁹² E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 2.25, §193; Thucydides 2.43.4; Polybius 6.37.12–13; Diodorus Siculus 13.97.5; 13.98.1; Justin, *Epit.* 6.8.13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Isocrates* 5; Valerius Maximus 2.7.15; Plutarch, *Alex.* 45.3–4; *CIL* 2.172.

²⁴⁹³ Cicero, *Marcell.* 8.25; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 69.6; 93.2; 98.10; 101.8, 10; *Nat. Q.* 6.32.12; Musonius Rufus 10, p. 76.23–24; 17, p. 110.1–3; 22, p. 130; Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 3.7–8.

²⁴⁹⁴ E.g., 2 Macc 7:1–41; 4 Macc 6:27–30; 9:7; Josephus, *War* 1.43–44, 58.

²⁴⁹⁵ Menander Rhetor 2.15, 431.13–15; 431.31–432.2.

²⁴⁹⁶ Menander Rhetor 2.15, 432.9–14.

²⁴⁹⁷ In Greek, the wording of 20:26 evokes 1 Sam 12:5.

²⁴⁹⁸ In the LXX, Ezekiel's "watchman" is *skopos*; in Acts 20:28, each of them is an *episkopos*.

²⁴⁹⁹ E.g., Deut 32; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.177–93; *T. Dan* 5:4; *T. Zeb.* 9:5; *T. Jud.* 17:1; 18:2.

become distinct from elders.)²⁵⁰⁰ Greek commonly used the term translated overseer (*episkopos*) for all sorts of oversight. The LXX adopts it for leaders, and the Qumran scrolls employ an analogous Hebrew term.²⁵⁰¹ The LXX also uses the cognate verb “overseeing” God’s people alongside the title “shepherd” (Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:10–11; Zech 10:3; 11:16).²⁵⁰² Although the *overseers* here have been believers for at most four years (Acts 20:31), the role is presumably similar to that noted in Phil 1:1, 1 Tim 3:1–13, and Tit 1:5–9 (where the NRSV anachronistically translates *episkopoi* as *bishops*).

As rulers of sheep, shepherds (Acts 20:28)²⁵⁰³ naturally provided a natural figurative image for rulers. Homer used it for both Greek²⁵⁰⁴ and Trojan²⁵⁰⁵ leaders and their allies, especially for Agamemnon.²⁵⁰⁶ The image ideally implies leaders who care for and protect their people.²⁵⁰⁷ Dio pointed out that Homer calls a king a “shepherd” (*Or.* 4.43), because he should protect and nurture the sheep, not exploit them (*Or.* 4.44). In Jewish tradition, Israel was God’s flock.²⁵⁰⁸ The OT sometimes calls Israel’s leaders shepherds.²⁵⁰⁹ In CD 13.9, an overseer should care for his people like a shepherd for his flock.

In Acts 20:28, *Church of God* is a usually Pauline expression (e.g., 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9) reflecting a biblical title for Israel, rendered in the LXX as “the assembly of God” (Judg 20:2; 1 Chron 28:8; Neh 13:1) or “the assembly of the Lord” (Deut 23:2–4, 9; Mic 2:5). Interpreters vary as to whether *the blood* is God’s own blood (cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 1.1) or the blood of God’s own (i.e., *the blood of his own Son*, as in the NRSV). The former is the more usual way to take the Greek phrase, and Luke certainly views Jesus as divine (cf. comment on Acts 2:38; 16:7); or perhaps this is

²⁵⁰⁰ See Ignatius, *Magn.* 2.1; 3.1; 6.1; 7.1; *Trall.* 3.1; 12.2; *Phld.* pref.; 10.2; *Pol.* 6.1; further Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 181–269.

²⁵⁰¹ E.g., (of over thirty references) 1QS 6.12, 20; CD 13.6–16; 14.8–13; 15.8–14. This official records offenses of those reported for community discipline (CD 9.18–22).

²⁵⁰² Tannehill, *Acts*, 258.

²⁵⁰³ For further detail, see Keener, *John*, 799–812; B. Aubert, *The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse (Acts 20:17–38) Against Its Historical Background* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 126–216.

²⁵⁰⁴ Homer, *Il.* 4.296; 8.81; 10.73; 11.370, 842; 13.411; 16.2; 19.386; 23.389; *Od.* 17.109; 18.70; 24.456.

²⁵⁰⁵ Homer, *Il.* 1.263; 5.144, 513; 6.214; 10.406; 11.92; 13.600; 15.262; 20.110; 22.277.

²⁵⁰⁶ Homer, *Il.* 2.85, 243, 254; 4.413; 7.230; 10.3; 11.202; 19.35, 251; 24.654; *Od.* 3.156; 14.497.

²⁵⁰⁷ Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.2.14; *Mem.* 3.2.1; Silius Italicus 7.126–30; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 1.13; 3.41; Ps 23:1; Ezek 34:2–6, 11–16.

²⁵⁰⁸ E.g., Isa 49:9; 63:11; Jer 13:17; 31:10; 1 En. 89:16–24, 51–53; *LAB* 23:12; 30:5; *Sipre Deut.* 15.1.1.

²⁵⁰⁹ See Isa 56:11; 63:11; Jer 3:15; 10:21; 12:10; 22:22; 23:1–4, 34–36; 50:6; Ezek 34:2, 7–10; Mic 5:5; Nah 3:18; Zech 10:2–3; 11:5, 8, 15–17; cf. 1 En. 89:59–90:25; 2 Bar. 77:13.

hyperbole or grammatical imprecision. In any case, the point in context is that God's church is of priceless value to him (cf. also cf. 1 Pet 1:19); therefore woe to those who do not care for it lovingly!

Idle shepherds fail to protect God's flock from predators (Ezek 34:5).²⁵¹⁰ Yet just as shepherds must risk their lives to protect the flock from wolves, so these shepherds (Acts 20:28) must guard the flock against wolves (20:29). Ultimately this concern would require them to guard the sheep's welfare even above normal expectations of collegiality (20:30). God's people often become unfaithful after the deaths of godly leaders (Judg 2:7–11, 19; 4:1; 8:33; 10:5–6), and Paul was concerned for churches' firmness in his absence (Phil 1:27; 2:12). Faithful shepherds could be supplanted by exploiters of the sheep.²⁵¹¹

Domestic animals depended on herders for their protection.²⁵¹² Ancient writers thus contrasted shepherds, who sought to preserve the sheep, with the latter's predators.²⁵¹³ Sheep faced dangers from various predators, frequently wolves, both figuratively and literally²⁵¹⁴ (cf. Luke 10:3). People considered wolves deceitful,²⁵¹⁵ treacherous,²⁵¹⁶ and eager to plunder or rape,²⁵¹⁷ in contrast with those who seek to give more than to receive (Acts 20:33–35). Jewish sources sometimes depict Israel's enemies (Jer 5:6; Hab 1:8; 1 En. 56:5–6; 89:55) or evil leaders (Ezek 22:27) as wolves preying on sheep.

Given the context, these wolves' dominant erroneous interest may be more pecuniary than theological (cf. 20:33–35). They *entice the disciples to follow* themselves (20:30; cf. 5:37; Luke 21:8) instead of leading them to follow Jesus (Luke 9:23; 14:27). *From your own group* (Acts 20:30) indicates that Paul believed that some of these elders whom he had trained would

²⁵¹⁰ Cf. Themestios, *Speeches* 1.9d–10d (from 317–388 CE); John 10:12.

²⁵¹¹ So Maximus of Tyre 6.7.

²⁵¹² E.g., Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 352–53. Sheep flee strangers but follow their shepherd's signals (Polybius 12.4.2–4; Jn 10:3–4).

²⁵¹³ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 3.10–11; Statius, *Theb.* 4.361–69; Maximus of Tyre 19.2; Isa 31:4; Jer 49:19; 50:44; Amos 3:12; Zech 11:3; 1 En. 89:65; 4 Ezra 5:18.

²⁵¹⁴ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 22.263; Virgil, *Aen.* 9.566; *Ecl.* 3.80; 5.60; 8.52; Apollonius Rhodius 2.123–25; Tibullus 1.1.33–34; 2.1.20; 2.5.88; Phaedrus 1.1; Babrius 89; 93.3–11; 102.8; 105.1; 113.2–4; 132.1–4; Longus 1.11, 21–22; 2.22; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 23.4; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.17.41; Aristaeus, *Erotic Letters* 1.14.8–9.

²⁵¹⁵ Phaedrus 1.8.5–12; 1.10.9.

²⁵¹⁶ E.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.3.7, 9.

²⁵¹⁷ Lycophron, *Alex.* 102–3; Justin, *Epit.* 38.6.8; Ovid, *Met.* 5.626–27; 6.527–28; Velleius Paterculus 2.27.2; Phaedrus 1.16.5; Musonius Rufus 14, p. 92.21–22; Lucian, *Tim.* 8; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.22; Aristaeus, *Erotic Letters* 2.20.20–21; Gen 49:27.

not persevere (cf. 14:22; Luke 22:21–22; Deut 13:13). False teaching apparently eventually flourished around Ephesus (Eph 4:14; 1 Tim 1:3–7, 19–20; 4:1–3, 7; 6:3–5; 2 Tim 2:16–18; 3:4–9, 13; 4:3–4), although it was later addressed (Rev 2:2).

Although exhortations to remain *alert* (20:31) did not always evoke the image of literal wakefulness, Luke may recall the recent, concrete instance of Eutychus (20:9). Without sentinels' vigilance, entire units and armies could be destroyed;²⁵¹⁸ here the image is of watchful servants (Luke 12:37) or of shepherds (Acts 20:28) guarding their flocks from predators (20:29) by night (Luke 2:8). Paul again provides a model: *night or day* warning everyone with tears (Acts 20:31). *Night* and *day* reinforces the emphasis on duration in *three years*, which includes the parts of multiple years in 19:8, 10 (possibly fall of 52 to summer of 55 CE).

In 20:32, Paul entrusts their spiritual welfare to God's gracious care – just as he did with earlier elders he had appointed to carry on in his absence (14:23). In the OT, God *sanctified* his people (Exod 19:14; 31:13; Lev 20:7–8)²⁵¹⁹ and they “inherit” the promised land; in early Judaism, this land image extended to the entire earth;²⁵²⁰ this promise applies to all believers (Acts 20:32; 26:17–18).

In contrast to greedy false teachers (20:29), Paul offers himself as a model (20:35a) of seeking to give more than to receive (20:33–35). Paul refused pay especially to avoid the mistrust attached to those who taught for money (cf. 2 Cor 2:17; 7:2; 11:7–13; 1 Thess 2:5) or others who profited from religion (cf. Luke 16:14; 20:47; Acts 8:20; 19:24–27). Disdain for greedy preachers was widespread, sometimes among sages wishing to distance themselves from competitors.²⁵²¹ Disdain for gain, by contrast, generated respect.²⁵²²

²⁵¹⁸ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 10.309–12, 416–21; Thucydides 4.32.1; Polybius 11.3.1; Diodorus Siculus 3.55.1; 19.95.5–6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.47.1; 7.11.2–3; 9.34.4; Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.48; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.356, 370; *War* 6.68–69; *Life* 405.

²⁵¹⁹ Cf. also, e.g., *Jub.* 2:19, 21; 15:27; 22:29; *t. Ber.* 5:22; 6:9–14.

²⁵²⁰ See Rom 4:13; 1 *En.* 5:7; *Jub.* 17:3; 22:14; 32:19; 2 *Bar.* 51:3; *Mek. Besh.* 7.139–40; Hester, *Inheritance*, 30–36, 84.

²⁵²¹ See Plato, *Rep.* 2.364BC; *Laws* 10.908DE; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 35.4–15; Plutarch, *Lect.* 12, *Mor.* 43F; Liefeld, “Preacher,” 285–87; Malherbe, “Gentle,” 214; Brawley, *Luke-Acts and Jews*, 61; H. Tell, “Wisdom for Sale? The Sophists and Money,” *CP* 104 (1, 2009): 13–33; N. Neumann, “Kein Gewinn = Gewinn: Die kynisch geprägte Struktur der Argumentation in 1 Tim 6:3–12,” *NovT* 51 (2, 2009): 127–47.

²⁵²² For teachers, Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 54.3; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.29.621; other leaders or professions, cf. Isocrates, *Nic.* 37, *Or.* 3.34; Justin, *Epit.* 3.7.7; 6.8.6–8; Plutarch, *Arist.* 25.3; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.31.3; Tacitus, *Agr.* 6; 1 Tim 3:3.

Although Christ's agent deserves support (Luke 10:7), Paul relinquished this right (Acts 20:34; cf. 1 Cor 9:12–15).²⁵²³ Paul's artisan work would have seemed more respectable in Ephesus (Acts 20:34) than in some other places (18:3); Ephesus had some wealthy and prominent artisans,²⁵²⁴ and also an emerging nouveau riche class that was displacing the older hereditary elite.²⁵²⁵

Supporting *the weak* (20:35) includes the socioeconomically weak, the poor, and probably includes the *infirm* (what Luke means by the present Greek term elsewhere), many of whom could not earn wages. Although Paul supported caring for "the poor" generally,²⁵²⁶ he addresses this issue most often concerning his collection for the needy believers in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26–27; cf. 1 Cor 16:1–2; 2 Cor 8–9). Acts 20:35 offers a natural climax for a speech historically delivered en route to deliver that collection, even though Luke does not specify that setting.

Paul concludes in 20:35 with a saying of Jesus (cf. Peter's nearly concluding saying of Jesus in 11:16). Others also often would conclude a speech with a compelling maxim.²⁵²⁷ This saying is a beatitude, a rhetorical form found in Scripture, early Judaism,²⁵²⁸ and less commonly Greek sources,²⁵²⁹ and obviously Jesus's teaching (Luke 6:20–22). The sentiment here appears widely in ancient sources;²⁵³⁰ it could be a saying simply omitted by the Gospels or might be intended as Paul's paraphrase of a theme in Jesus tradition (cf. Luke 6:20–21, 24–25, 35, 38).²⁵³¹

20:36–38: TEARFUL PARTING

Luke uses scenes of affection for Paul (20:36–21:14) to reveal more about Paul's *êthos*, or character (through the way that characters within the

²⁵²³ For his manual labor, cf. also 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23, 27; 1 Thess 2:9; 4:11; as an example, 2 Thess 3:8–9; for providing for others, cf. Eph 4:28; 1 Thess 5:14.

²⁵²⁴ See Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 114–16.

²⁵²⁵ Baugh, "Paul and Ephesus," 64.

²⁵²⁶ See esp. B. W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*.

²⁵²⁷ See *Rhet. Alex.* 35, 1441b.10–11; R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 55; Watson, "Speech," 206.

²⁵²⁸ E.g., 4Q525 f2.2+3.1–2; 1 *En.* 99:10; *Ps. Sol.* 4:23; 5:16; 6:1; 10:1; 17:44; 18:6; 4 Macc 7:15, 22; 10:15; 17:18; 18:9; *Sipra Vayyiqra Dibura Dehobah* par. 5.44.1.1.

²⁵²⁹ E.g., *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* 322; Homeric Hymn 25, to the Muses and Apollo, lines 4–5; Polybius 26.1.13; Musonius Rufus frg. 35, p. 134; Babrius 103.20–21.

²⁵³⁰ Cf. Sir 4:31 and many Greek sources, although the paralleled wording (e.g., Thucydides 2.97.4) is often not very precise (see J. J. Kilgallen, "Acts 20:35 and Thucydides 2.97.4," *JBL* 112 (2, 1993): 312–14).

²⁵³¹ Paraphrasing for a Greek context might also explain Acts 26:14.

narrative world who knew him had perceived him) than Luke's audience could otherwise infer merely from Luke's fast-paced narrative. These provide the narrative equivalent of Paul's expressions of affectionate longing in his letters (e.g., Rom 1:11; 1 Thess 2:7–11; 3:1, 5, 8), expressions that typically underlined and reinforced the bond between individuals.²⁵³² Among qualities that would commend a person to an audience were love for and loyalty to friends.²⁵³³

After a farewell speech, one should pray for those one is leaving, as well as for oneself and one's journey.²⁵³⁴ Prayer with others is a motif in Acts (1:14; 2:42; 4:24; 13:2–3); kneeling appears in 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 21:5.²⁵³⁵

The best speeches (cf. 20:18–35),²⁵³⁶ like separations themselves,²⁵³⁷ could move hearers to tears (20:37); historians' scenes of weeping could also move audiences.²⁵³⁸ *Embraced . . . and kissed* (20:37) communicates pathos; Luke earlier employs the same Greek expressions for a father welcoming his lost son (Luke 15:20). In dramatic situations kissing and weeping were conjoined, as here.²⁵³⁹ Accompanying Paul to the ship also displayed affection.²⁵⁴⁰

Relatives greeted with kisses,²⁵⁴¹ especially in the immediate family.²⁵⁴² Male friends could embrace and kiss without sexual connotations,²⁵⁴³ though apparently less common in urban settings.²⁵⁴⁴ Students and teachers could also kiss.²⁵⁴⁵ Kissing was such a standard salutation that

²⁵³² E.g., Cicero, *Fam.* 5.6.5; 8.15.2; 10.23.7.

²⁵³³ *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442a.11–12. This can be exemplified by the responses of a narrative's other characters (e.g., Josephus, *Life* 84; De Pourcq and Roskam, "Mirroring Virtues," 168).

²⁵³⁴ Menander Rhetor 2.15, 431.23–24; 433.10–13.

²⁵³⁵ In the OT, see 1 Kgs 8:54; 2 Chron 6:13; Dan 6:10.

²⁵³⁶ E.g., Cicero, *Brut.* 93.322; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.114; 6.1.30; for farewell speeches, Josephus, *Ant.* 4.194.

²⁵³⁷ E.g., 1 Sam 20:41; *T. Mos.* 11:23; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.320; Pliny, *Ep.* 4.1.4.

²⁵³⁸ Some, Polybius complains, overdid this (2.56.7–8).

²⁵³⁹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.7.1; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.49; Suetonius, *Otho* 12.2; Gen 29:11; 45:15; Tob 7:6; Luke 7:38.

²⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Hierocles, *Parents* (Stobaeus, *Anth.* 4.79.53); Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.12; with tears, Nicolaus, *Aug.* 17.

²⁵⁴¹ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 16.190–91; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.7.1; Plutarch, *R.Q.* 6, *Mor.* 265B; Suetonius, *Otho* 10.2.

²⁵⁴² Euripides, *Andr.* 416; Virgil, *Georg.* 2.523; Ovid, *Metam.* 10.525; Longus 4.22–23; Gen 27:26–27; 31:28, 55; *Jub.* 22:10–11; 26:21; 31:21.

²⁵⁴³ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 21.224–27; Valerius Maximus 7.8.9; 2 Sam 15:5; 19:39; 20:9.

²⁵⁴⁴ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.59.

²⁵⁴⁵ E.g., Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 2.3.3; 3.13.2; *Ad Verum Imp.* 2.8; Lucian, *Alex.* 41; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.25.537; *t. Hag.* 2.1.

neglecting it could function as an obvious insult.²⁵⁴⁶ Typically these greetings were light kisses on the lips.²⁵⁴⁷ Early Christians kissed in familial affection,²⁵⁴⁸ although later abuses led to restrictions.²⁵⁴⁹

Although Luke specifically describes intimate details of Paul's departures on the journey only rarely (here and in 21:5),²⁵⁵⁰ these examples represent what Luke expects us to recognize as a larger pattern in the way Paul parted in places where he stopped. The expressions of affection resemble also OT departure and reunion scenes.²⁵⁵¹

21:1–14: PROPHETIC WARNINGS EN ROUTE TO JERUSALEM

In 21:1–14, Luke portrays Paul as much loved by the disciples in the Diaspora churches and as hosted warmly by Philip, the first pioneer of the gentile mission (8:5–40). Luke also shows that Paul's arrest and captivity are no accident or sign of judgment; rather, like Jesus, Paul chose to follow God's costly plan (21:4; esp. 21:11–14; cf. 20:23; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 18:33; 20:14–15; 22:19–22, esp. 13:33).

Ancient audiences showed interest in geographic details familiar to them (20:13–15; 21:1–3). Because of uncertain breezes, ships' voyages along the south coast of Asia Minor were normally slow and tedious; they frequently stopped at Rhodes (21:1). Cos (21:1) was the most famous of islands near Rhodes (Polybius 30.7.9; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.36.134), known for its excellent wines.²⁵⁵² The coastal city of Cos, named for the island on which it lay, was said to be very beautiful when approached by the sea (Strabo 14.2.19). The massive island of Rhodes was known for its wealth (Polybius 5.90.3; 31.31.1–3), fitting its location for trade (Polybius 5.90.4; Strabo 14.2.10). Its leading city, also called Rhodes, reportedly the region's best harbor (Strabo 14.2.5), was on the northeast, toward Patara and easily approached from

²⁵⁴⁶ E.g., Nero toward senators (Suetonius, *Nero* 37.3); perhaps Luke 7:45.

²⁵⁴⁷ Euripides, *Phoen.* 1671; *Alc.* 403–4; Virgil, *Aen.* 12.434; Ovid, *Metam.* 2.356–57; 10.362; Plutarch, *R.Q.* 6, *Mor.* 265B; *Jos. Asen.* 8:6 takes this for granted. Toner, *Culture*, 133, notes the frequency of foul breath, which may have reduced the duration of much social kissing.

²⁵⁴⁸ Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:1; later, more liturgically, Justin, *1 Apol.* 65; Tertullian, *Wife* 2.4; Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 31.

²⁵⁴⁹ Athenagoras 32; *Apost. Const.* 2.7.57.

²⁵⁵⁰ For other signs of affection toward Paul, see 9:25; 19:30–31; 21:12.

²⁵⁵¹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 682, citing Gen 33:4; 45:14.

²⁵⁵² Strabo 14.1.15; 14.2.19; Pliny, *Nat.* 14.10.79; for silk, see Pliny, *Nat.* 11.26.76–11.27.77. See further Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 67–73.

Cos to its northwest.²⁵⁵³ Patara was on the (mainland) Lycian coast; grain ships from Alexandria headed for Rome often stopped there, as at Myra (27:5).

From Patara the voyagers catch a larger ship making the 350-mile (about 550 km) voyage to Tyre across the open sea, thus not needing to hug the coast or put in at ports along the way. From Patara or Rhodes to Tyre would take four or five days.²⁵⁵⁴ The ship thus leaves Cyprus (cf. 13:4) “on the left” (east); no other land would be visible during this voyage. Travelers needed to wait for ships sailing toward their own destination, a destination normally determined by where ships would unload cargo (21:3).

Roman Syria (Acts 20:3; 21:3) included Tyre (21:3) in Phoenicia (21:2). Ships could spend much longer unloading at major ports than *seven days*.²⁵⁵⁵ But Tyre was only about 29 miles (46 km),²⁵⁵⁶ or no more than two days’ walk, from Ptolemais (21:7), so Paul probably stayed especially for the believers there (11:19; 15:3). Tyre was an island kingdom in the OT, but a colonnaded, paved road lined with shops now connected the former island with the rest of Tyre on the mainland.²⁵⁵⁷

Believers there warn Paul against travel to Jerusalem (21:4), but the Spirit has led Paul to go there (19:21). Luke does not call their utterance false; rather, he attributes it to *the Spirit* (often associated with prophecy, e.g., 2:17–18). Although biblical prophecies were often conditional, evaded by changed behavior (1 Kgs 21:29; 2 Kgs 6:9–10; Jer 18:7–10; Jon 3:10),²⁵⁵⁸ attempts to evade prophesied fate without changed behavior were futile (1 Kgs 22:30–35).²⁵⁵⁹ Prophecies often seemed ambiguous until fulfilled.²⁵⁶⁰ Given some people’s mistrust of failed or ambiguous prophecies,²⁵⁶¹ Luke

²⁵⁵³ On Rhodes, see further Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31; Keener, *Acts*, 3:3075–78; E. Kyriou and D. Zappeiropoulou, ΠΟΛΙΣ 2.400 ΧΡΟΝΙΑ (2 vols.; Athens: Hypourgeo Politismou, 1999).

²⁵⁵⁴ Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 45; Xenophon, *Eph.* 1.11–12; 1.14.6.

²⁵⁵⁵ Casson, *Mariners*, 210; cf. 172–73, 191.

²⁵⁵⁶ Mark Wilson (personal correspondence, Nov. 25, 2011). Cf. Strabo 16.2.26; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.17.76.

²⁵⁵⁷ Quintus Curtius 4.2.18; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.17.76.

²⁵⁵⁸ Cf. also Homer, *Il.* 9.410–16; 18.88–116; 19.421–23.

²⁵⁵⁹ Among gentiles, cf., e.g., Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1295–1301; Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 717–25, 744–45, 788–97; Valerius Maximus 1.8. ext. 9; Apollodorus, *Bib.* 3.5.7.

²⁵⁶⁰ Besides many OT prophecies, see, e.g., Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1112–13; Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 439; *Women of Trachis* 1169–73; Herodotus 1.46–48; 1.53.3; 1.91; Diodorus Siculus 16.91.2–3; Virgil, *Aen.* 6.98–101; Valerius Maximus 1.7. ext. 8; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 74.4; Plutarch, *Alex.* 37.1; Josephus, *War* 1.80.

²⁵⁶¹ Quintus Curtius 4.7.29; Lucian, *Z. Rants* 20, 28, 31, 43; *Alex.* 48. For other recent approaches, see K. Crabbe, “Accepting Prophecy: Paul’s Response to Agabus with

presumably would not have *invented* a prophecy worded as if prohibiting his reliable protagonist from doing what he in fact did.

Speaking *through the Spirit*, however, differs from declaring, “the Holy Spirit said” (13:2). The Spirit inspires their knowledge of what awaits Paul, as in the more extended example in 21:11 (cf. 20:23). But although they rightly apply this knowledge in love, their prophetic knowledge is limited, marring their application (cf. 2 Sam 7:3–5; 2 Kgs 2:3–5, 16; Jer 35:2–14 [esp. 35:5]; Luke 7:20; 1 Cor 13:9; 14:29). Paul will suffer, but this is God’s will (Acts 21:13).

The farewell scene in 21:5–6 evokes the pathos of the one that precedes it (20:36–38). He need not repeat all details, but adding *wives and children* may add pathos.²⁵⁶² The stretch of *beach* (21:5) between Tyre and Ptolemais (21:7) was notably sandy, used for making glass.²⁵⁶³

Greetings (21:7, 19; cf. 18:22; 20:1) were essential in Mediterranean culture.²⁵⁶⁴ Ptolemais may have been their ship’s next port of call; Luke probably mentions the hospitality to emphasize the movement’s spread and virtuous hospitality, and its widespread acceptance of Paul (as in 21:4, 8; 27:3; 28:14–15). Ptolemais had recently become a Roman colony (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.17.75); many Jews lived there (Josephus, *War* 2.477) and it was well-known to cosmopolitan Judeans.²⁵⁶⁵

Luke focuses on a particular incident in Caesarea (21:8–14) that climaxes and illustrates more fully the earlier warnings (20:23; 21:4), building further suspense. Caesarea was roughly 40 miles from Ptolemais, a day’s journey by ship or two along the coastal road. The narrative picks up Philip in Caesarea (21:8), where it left him (8:40).²⁵⁶⁶ Ironically, Paul as persecutor helped kill Philip’s colleague Stephen and force Philip on the evangelistic tour that led him to Caesarea. As fellow believers, Philip and Paul now act as brothers,²⁵⁶⁷ but Paul will soon face essentially the same charge in the temple that led to Stephen’s death (6:13; 21:28).

Insights from Valerius Maximus and Josephus,” *JSNT* 39 (2, 2016): 188–208; D. L. White, “Confronting Oracular Contradiction in Acts 21:1–14,” *NovT* 58 (1, 2016): 27–46.

²⁵⁶² Cf. Hermogenes, *Issues* 52.14–17; Polybius 2.56.7; Cicero, *Sest.* 69.144; Quintus Curtius 3.13.12; 5.6.7; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.320; *Life* 207.

²⁵⁶³ Strabo 16.2.25; Pliny, *Nat.* 36.65.191.

²⁵⁶⁴ Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 596; Isocrates, *Demon.* 20, *Or.* 1; Sir 41:20; 1 Macc 7:33; Josephus, *War* 2.319, 325; *Abot* 6:10; *t. Ber.* 2:20; today, cf. D. F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (2nd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 234.

²⁵⁶⁵ *Let. Aris.* 115; seventy-seven times in Josephus.

²⁵⁶⁶ Historically Paul may have met him also earlier in 9:30; 18:22.

²⁵⁶⁷ For the apologetic value of this portrait, see Spencer, *Philip*, 260.

Hosts and guests spent time conversing, so over several days (21:10) Luke probably learned more about the earlier Judean church. Philip may be one of Luke's sources (for 6:1–7; 8:4–40; 9:31–10:48), especially during his longer time in Caesarea in 24:27.²⁵⁶⁸ Representatives from the younger Pauline churches of the Diaspora (20:4–5) now meet leaders from the church's earliest days (21:8–18). Luke also is listing witnesses who can attest how long Paul was in Jerusalem before his arrest (cf. 21:18, 26–27), which left no time to foment unrest (24:11).

Philip's four prophetic daughters²⁵⁶⁹ both cast Philip in a favorable light²⁵⁷⁰ and reinforce Luke's balancing of gender and age in 2:17–18 (cf. 21:10–11; Luke 2:25, 36).²⁵⁷¹ The term translated *unmarried* usually referred to prepubescent or young adolescent virgins. Although some gentiles connected special spiritual power with consecrated virgins,²⁵⁷² Luke's point is probably simply that these daughters are young. Together with the now older male prophet Agabus (21:10–11; cf. 11:28), they illustrate that the Spirit of prophecy is for old and young alike (2:17–18; cf. the virgin in Luke 1:27, 35).²⁵⁷³

Agabus comes to warn Paul graphically of what awaits him; this was not Agabus's first time to bring bad news north about Jerusalem (11:28–29).²⁵⁷⁴ Like earlier prophets, Agabus offers a symbolic action that he then interprets (Isa 20:2–3; Jer 19:1–15; Ezek 4:1–17; Hos 1:2–3); most analogous are Jeremiah's linen waistband (Jer 13) and Jeremiah *binding* himself by wearing a yoke (signifying slavery; Jer 27:2). Agabus ties himself with Paul's sash, a strip of cloth that one would wrap several times around the waist

²⁵⁶⁸ See Barrett, *Acts*, 51; Chance, *Acts*, 6.

²⁵⁶⁹ Historically credible figures, they apparently emigrated (with Philip) before or in the wake of Caesarea's massacres in 66 CE; see Papias 3.9; 5.6. Theologically, cf. *T. Job* 48–50, although the date is uncertain.

²⁵⁷⁰ Children's activity often reflected on parents in antiquity (see, e.g., Sir 3:10; Xenophon, *Apol.* 31; Valerius Maximus 4.4. praef.).

²⁵⁷¹ Philip crosses not only the "all flesh" barrier of 2:17 (8:5–40) but also its gender barrier.

²⁵⁷² Vestals (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.69.4; 1.76.3; Cicero, *Cat.* 4.1.2; 4.6.12; *Font.* 21.46–47; Pliny, *Nat.* 28.3.13; Plutarch, *R.Q.* 96, *Mor.* 286E; Suetonius, *Tib.* 76; cf. Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 52.15–17), the inspiring Muses (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.56), and especially prophetic priestesses of Apollo, including the Pythoness (see comment on Acts 16:16), Cassandra (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 11.153–54), and the Sibyl.

²⁵⁷³ See Keener, *Acts*, 3:3090–3102; cf. 1:882–86.

²⁵⁷⁴ As a senior prophet whose message prefigures the following narrative, Agabus receives more space than Philip's daughters, but Luke does not play them against each other (Reimer, *Women*, 249; Gaventa, *Acts*, 294); analogously, he does not elucidate John's prophecies while young (Luke 1:15–17). Others prophesy to Paul still more anonymously (Acts 20:23; 21:4).

and in which one could carry money. The symbolic “binding” (21:11; cf. 20:23) is fulfilled in 21:33.

In keeping with Luke’s emphasis on the Spirit of prophecy (2:17–18), Agabus’s *Thus says the Holy Spirit* (21:11) evokes the OT expression “thus says YHWH” (cf. similarly Rev 2:1, 7). Against the wording of 21:11, Luke does not report Jerusalemites binding Paul or voluntarily delivering him to the Romans (despite 24:6); the Romans inadvertently *rescue* Paul and bind him (21:32–33; 22:29). Nevertheless, the sense is close enough (cf. 28:17),²⁵⁷⁵ and the wording suits Luke’s parallelism among major characters, linking Paul’s passion with that of Jesus (Luke 18:32).

In 21:12 *we and the people there* – presumably including the narrator, Philip, and Philip’s four prophetess daughters – confirm Agabus’s prophetic word (cf. 1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thes 5:20–22). Like the disciples in Tyre (Acts 21:4), they urge “through the Spirit” that Paul should not go, again revealing others’ love for Paul (20:36–38).²⁵⁷⁶ Emotional pressure from loved ones could sometimes change a leader’s plans,²⁵⁷⁷ but readers would deem refusal to be deterred honorable.²⁵⁷⁸

Although friends kept Paul from a riot in Ephesus (cf. 19:30), they cannot keep him from one in Jerusalem (21:27–22:24). Whereas Peter initially fails his commitment to face prison and death for Jesus (Luke 22:33), Paul prepares for binding²⁵⁷⁹ and death (Acts 21:13). Paul knows God’s will (22:14; 23:11; cf. 19:21; 20:22), and Paul’s friends ultimately fall silent (21:14; cf. 11:18) and accept it (21:14), affirming the Father’s will rather than their own (Luke 22:42).

21:15–26: THE JERUSALEM CHURCH’S CONCERNS

Representatives of the Diaspora churches, with their many gentile members, here meet leaders of the Jerusalem church. Although Luke’s audience probably knows that Rome will decimate Jerusalem in less than a decade, Luke shows that heritage and mission need not be sundered. As

²⁵⁷⁵ Cf. poetic imagery in, e.g., Isa 37:29; 40:31; Jer 4:5, 19–21; Mic 1:10.

²⁵⁷⁶ Ancient audiences could understand that both act honorably; cf. Valerius Maximus 4.1.3, who praises the people for breaching rules to reelect an honorable man, and the man for rebuking them in view of the rules.

²⁵⁷⁷ Caesar, *Galic War* 1.20; Josephus, *Life* 205–12; cf. pressure on Moses in *Ant.* 4.321.

²⁵⁷⁸ Cf., e.g., Apoll. Rhod. 1.292–305; Plutarch, *Themist.* 10.5. More recently, cf., e.g., R. H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon, 1950), 179–81.

²⁵⁷⁹ Being chained was considered highly shameful (Polybius 1.69.5; 20.10.7–9; 38.17.2).

in ch. 15, Paul is welcomed (15:3–4) and recounts God's acts (15:3–4, 12); some rejoice (cf. 15:3; 11:18); and the Jerusalem decree (15:20, 28–29) is reaffirmed (21:25).²⁵⁸⁰

In 21:16, Caesarean disciples provide Paul's entourage an escort, an expression of hospitality and respect. The journey to Jerusalem probably took three days, with two overnight stops. Luke probably specifically names *Mnason of Cyprus* (as opposed to many other hosts) because he, like Philip, was an *early disciple* (like some other Cypriotes in Jerusalem, 4:36; 11:20), thus a potential informant for Luke's history.²⁵⁸¹ Mnason was probably a person of means, given the size of Paul's company (20:4–5).

Although Luke puts the best face on it, Paul's reception in Jerusalem is somewhat mixed. Some²⁵⁸² *brothers welcomed* even the uncircumcised gentile members of the party (21:17), presumably housing them hospitably, and they had ready access to *the elders* (21:18). But while the movement's leaders accept Paul (cf. Gal 2:7–10), not all in the church agreed (Acts 21:21; cf. Rom 3:8; 15:31). Nevertheless, against charges that Paul stirs riots (Acts 24:5) or preaches a new, non-Jewish religion (21:21), Luke emphasizes that Paul goes out of his way to work for peace between the mother and daughter churches, underlining salvation-historical continuity between heritage and mission (21:13, 26).²⁵⁸³ This is also the function of Paul's collection for Jerusalem in his letters (Rom 15:26–27), although Luke virtually omits it (except in Acts 24:17).

Although Luke elsewhere presents James as an advocate of peaceful compromise (Acts 15:13–21; cf. James 3:10–18; 4:11–12; 5:9), some believe that he and Jerusalem's believers failed to support Paul, or rejected his offering, or (worst of all) set a deliberate trap for him (21:23–29).²⁵⁸⁴ Beyond arguing from silence, such interpretations discount the only eye-witness account we have (i.e., Luke's). Betraying a former guest was considered a heinous offense, the antithesis of piety.

²⁵⁸⁰ With Johnson, *Acts*, 379.

²⁵⁸¹ Thus, for example, Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.22.524 specifies an informant's age in connection with his knowledge about Philostratus's subject.

²⁵⁸² Most of the church is not yet aware of his arrival (21:22).

²⁵⁸³ J. Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers," pages 11–20 in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People: Eight Critical Perspectives* (ed. J. B. Tyson. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1988), 20; idem, *Luke and People of God*, 198–99, even contends that Luke seeks to persuade Jewish Christians to welcome Paul's gentile converts.

²⁵⁸⁴ Against the "trap" interpretation, see Bauckham, "James," 478–79; Rudolph, *Jew to Jews*, 60–62.

Luke does not report their support of Paul in custody, but neither does he report that of Paul's colleagues, including himself, except Paul's generic "friends" in 24:23. Why would James and colleagues, who had initiated such collections (Gal 2:10) reject the collection? Only the most nationalistic Judeans would reject all gentile gifts (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.409). Rejecting the Diaspora church's offering would entail sending it back with those who brought it. Such an affront²⁵⁸⁵ would have sealed a breach with Paul's churches, inviting Luke's apologetic rather than silence.

This does not mean that Jerusalem believers embraced Paul's entourage enthusiastically (cf. Rom 15:31). Roman misadministration had stoked increasing nationalism and mistrust of gentiles,²⁵⁸⁶ so James and the elders walked a fine line between their constituency's context and the need for believers' cross-cultural unity. James's execution (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200) soon after Paul's voyage to Rome illustrates Jerusalem believers' precarious political situation.²⁵⁸⁷ Judean believers earlier rescued Paul from the consequences of his preaching (Acts 9:29–30).

Preliminary greetings (21:19a) were essential; these would have included clasping or shaking hands and likely embraces and kisses. Normally the social inferior would first greet the social superior; Paul defers respect to James and the elders. They favorably receive Paul's accounts of God's continuing work among the gentiles (21:19–20; cf. 15:3–4, 12). Welcoming God's work among gentiles, however (21:25), does not by itself address the cultural disunity of the church, to which discussion now proceeds (21:20–24).

Jesus's movement was flourishing in Jerusalem partly because it was known as law-abiding (21:20).²⁵⁸⁸ The elders have a strategy to counter misrepresentations of Paul's approach to the law (Acts 21:21), demonstrating that Paul did not oppose zeal for the law (21:22–24). Historically, such a strategy may have made it easier to publicly acknowledge the gift from the Pauline churches.

²⁵⁸⁵ Rejecting a gift initiated enmity (Marshall, *Enmity*, 13–21), or at the least displayed contempt (Pliny, *Ep.* 8.6.9).

²⁵⁸⁶ Cf. comment on Acts 21:38; Josephus, *War* 2.266–68, 284–92, 457–568.

²⁵⁸⁷ On his martyrdom, see further Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.4–7; R. P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1988), lxii–lxix.

²⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–3. The dividing line was no longer messianic views (contrast earlier 1 Thess 2:14–15) but nationalism.

Thousands (21:20; cf. Luke 12:1) often signified simply a large figure,²⁵⁸⁹ but when taken literally the Greek term could mean “tens of thousands.” Given current estimates of Jerusalem’s population in this period at perhaps eighty thousand,²⁵⁹⁰ and that most Judeans were rural, the literal figure is not impossible. Successful religious movements sometimes multiply fastest at the beginning; thus during Francis Asbury’s forty years of ministry in North America, Methodism increased possibly one-thousandfold.²⁵⁹¹ For exponential growth, one may compare the growth of both Christianity and Islam in Africa over the course of the twentieth century. Josephus’s silence about a movement that would have outnumbered his three or four “sects” might invite more suspicion, but it is likely simply diplomatic given the movement’s unpopularity in Rome (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). Ultimately, even if Luke’s language (*many* myriads) is hyperbolic, it is unlikely that he would have merely invented a massive Jerusalem church suspicious of Paul!²⁵⁹²

That *they are all zealous for the law* (21:20) is positive or neutral in itself (cf. Luke 1:6; 2:22–24; 5:14; 18:20; 23:56), including for Paul (Acts 16:3; 18:18; 22:3, 12; 24:14). It causes conflict only because of the slander that Paul is teaching against it (21:21). That is, *Paul* rather than the elders is accused of violating the spirit of the Jerusalem decree (21:21, 25). The leaders understand the nuances of Paul’s position – Jews may keep the law and gentiles need not (cf. 1 Cor 7:18–19; 9:20–21; Gal 5:6; 6:15) – but popular discourse often simplifies and polarizes views in binary terms.²⁵⁹³ Worse yet, the Greek term translated *told* in Acts 21:21 could mean “instructed”: the slander might come from some teachers in the church.²⁵⁹⁴ False witnesses charge Stephen with undermining Moses’s traditions and customs (6:14); here the Jerusalem church itself repeats such a slander against Paul (21:21).

To *forsake* (Greek *apostasian apo*) *Moses* (21:21) evokes rebellion against the Lord (LXX Josh 22:22; 2 Chron 29:19; Jer 2:19; 1 Macc 2:15). Jews

²⁵⁸⁹ E.g., Euripides, *Med.* 965; Philo, *Abr.* 1, 64; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.1, 67; Ag. *Ap.* 1.38; 1 Cor 14:19.

²⁵⁹⁰ J. Wilkinson, “Ancient Jerusalem: Its Water Supply and Population,” *PEQ* 106 (1, 1974): 33–51; M. Broshi, “La population de l’ancienne Jérusalem,” *RB* 82 (1, 1975): 5–14; Fiensy, “Composition,” 214; Reinhardt, “Population Size,” 237–43.

²⁵⁹¹ M. A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 190, 216; cf. T. S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 322.

²⁵⁹² See further discussion in Keener, “Plausibility of Growth Figures.”

²⁵⁹³ Absence also increases vulnerability; see, e.g., Justin, *Epit.* 11.5.1–2; 26.2.9–10; 32.2.8; Suetonius, *Jul.* 23; *Aug.* 10.

²⁵⁹⁴ So Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 46.

despised apostates as traitors.²⁵⁹⁵ By his critics' standards, Paul was an apostate,²⁵⁹⁶ but Paul himself honors the law (Acts 21:24; Rom 7:12–16; 8:4; 9:31; 1 Cor 9:21) and maintains his Jewish identity (Acts 13:26; 28:19; Rom 9:3; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:24).²⁵⁹⁷

Like gentiles,²⁵⁹⁸ Jews²⁵⁹⁹ regarded slander as evil. But Paul's reputation did not merely differ from the Jerusalem believers' own practice; it fed the antagonism of their own Judean critics (cf. Gal 5:11; 6:12; 1 Thess 2:16).²⁶⁰⁰ Historically, some slandered Paul (2 Cor 6:8), particularly concerning his approach to the law and righteousness (Rom 3:8). Believers may expect to be slandered (Luke 4:24; 6:22–23, 26), but Paul would desire to guard against *false* accusations (Rom 12:17; 14:16; 2 Cor 8:21).²⁶⁰¹

What then? (21:22) was a common way of setting up the reader for an answer or explanation.²⁶⁰² Luke depicts the Nazirite vow and purification (21:26) positively (cf. 18:18; Luke 1:15; 2:22). Paul purifies himself as well (Acts 21:26; 24:18), although for temple purity reasons and not as part of their vow.²⁶⁰³ Nazirite vows were a minimum of thirty days;²⁶⁰⁴ their period now neared its completion, probably timed in advance for Pentecost.²⁶⁰⁵ Although Nazirites' offerings could be costly (Num 6:14, 17; *m. Naz.* 8–11); Paul may have brought some funds for such purposes (Acts 24:17). The plan was a noble one, marred only by an outcome that could

²⁵⁹⁵ See, e.g., 3 Macc 1:3; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.141; 20.100; *War* 7.47, 50–53; more generally but thoroughly, S. G. Wilson, *Leaving the Fold: Apostates and Defectors in Antiquity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004).

²⁵⁹⁶ See J. M. G. Barclay, "Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?" *JSNT* 60 (1995): 89–120 (113–15), though I believe that he overstates Paul's assimilation (103–4). Cf. diverse interpretations in R. P. Thompson, " 'What Do You Think You Are Doing, Paul?': Synagogues, Accusations, and Ethics in Paul's Ministry in Acts 16–21," pages 64–78 in *Acts and Ethics* (ed. T. E. Phillips; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

²⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Rudolph, *Jew to Jew*.

²⁵⁹⁸ E.g., Theophrastus, *Char.* 28; Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.76; Polybius 1.36.2–3; 29.1.1–3; Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.81–82; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 37.32–33; Lucian, *Slander* 12.

²⁵⁹⁹ E.g., 1QS 7.15–17; *Sib. Or.* 1.178; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.294–95; 16.81; *Ag. Ap.* 2.89; *T. Ab.* 12:6 B; *t. 'Arak.* 2:10.

²⁶⁰⁰ Cf. rightly Watson, *Gentiles*, 107; Bauckham, "James," 477.

²⁶⁰¹ Among others, e.g., Isocrates, *Demon.* 17, *Or.* 1; *Nic.* 54, *Or.* 3.38; Nepos 25 (Atticus), 6.4; Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.2.14; *m. Abot* 2:1; *t. Abod. Zar.* 6:6; *Seqal.* 2:2; *Sipre Deut.* 79.1.1.

²⁶⁰² E.g., Musonius Rufus 5, p. 50.21; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 31.55, 60; 45.10; 46.9; 47.14; 77/78.19–20; Lucian, *Book-Coll.* 3; *Rom* 3:3, 9.

²⁶⁰³ See Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.89; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.145; 18.19; *War* 5.100; *John* 11:55.

²⁶⁰⁴ Josephus, *War* 2.313; *m. Naz.* 1:3–7; 2:10; 3:6.

²⁶⁰⁵ Not, as some have proposed, to trap Paul!

not be foreseen.²⁶⁰⁶ Paul's accusers might have denounced him in the temple whether or not he had gone there for sacrifice.²⁶⁰⁷

As the elders recognize (21:24), Paul himself identifies with his own people (21:26; 22:3–5, 12, 14) except where it would impinge on the same freedom for the gospel in other cultures (22:21–22).²⁶⁰⁸ (*Judgment* in 21:25 probably echoes the use of the same Greek term in 15:19 and 16:4.)

21:27–30: EPHESIAN JEWS INCITE A RIOT AGAINST PAUL

Paul's opponents falsely accuse him of the capital offense of desecrating God's temple (21:28), amplifying the sort of charges that earlier got Stephen killed (6:11–14). Paul's friendship with a gentile ironically lands him in Roman custody, while this Roman arrest also fortuitously delivers him from a Stephen-like lynching. The aftermath of this accusation escalates the book's movement "from Jerusalem to Rome" (chs. 21–28).

That his own people's opposition leads to Paul's gentile custody fits a narrative pattern (13:50; 14:2; 17:5; 18:12), but is also historically plausible.²⁶⁰⁹ Paul expected opposition in Jerusalem (Rom 15:31) and was probably detained by Romans soon afterward (Phil 1:7, 13, 14, 17; Col 4:3, 18). Apart from subversives caught in the act, Romans usually detained only those accused by local informants; yet many such informants would have killed a temple defiler rather than patiently prosecuted him. Moreover, Luke would not forego the opportunity to parallel Paul and Jesus if the Sanhedrin formally arrested Paul and handed him over to the governor (cf. 24:6).

This setting necessitates Luke's narrative apologetic for Paul's innocence:

- Not Paul but his accusers started the riot (against 24:5).
- Roman authorities initially detained Paul by mistake, through false (indeed, conflicting, hence inadmissible) claims against him (21:34).

²⁶⁰⁶ In principle, thinkers recognized that leaders were not responsible for unforeseen dangers (e.g., Hermogenes, *Issues* 68.10–69.21; Quintilian, *Decl.* 301.16; Libanius, *Declam.* 36.42; 44.50–52, 61).

²⁶⁰⁷ For the narrative, that Paul was there for the latter highlights his innocence (24:12, 17–18) – not collusion between Asian Jews and local believers.

²⁶⁰⁸ Long before the New Perspective or Paul within Judaism approaches, F. J. A. Hort (*Judaistic Christianity* [ed. J. O. F. Murray; Cambridge: Macmillan, 1894], 110–11) insisted that Paul's letters betray no sign "that he took advantage for himself of the kind of liberty which he so passionately claimed for Gentile Christians."

²⁶⁰⁹ Cf. E. Regev, "Temple Concerns and High-Priestly Prosecutions from Peter to James: Between Narrative and History," *NTS* 56 (1, 2010): 64–89.

- Political pressure from influential opponents (24:1; 25:9) prolonged his custody.
- Paul was the victim, not the perpetrator, of elements of unrest (23:12–14; 25:3).

Accusations that Paul is a revolutionary (21:38; cf. 5:36–37) or spreads apostasy in the Diaspora invite two themes in the later defense speeches: Paul as an innocent Roman citizen and a faithful Pharisee.

Paul's Asian Jewish accusers (21:27) know him from Ephesus (21:29) and may include Alexander (19:33). Not only had he split their synagogue (19:8–9), but his ministry also led to the pagan riot for which they got blamed (19:26, 33–34). Yet their exposure to him (19:8–9) makes them all the more liable for the distortion here. If Paul had not defiled the Artemis temple (19:37), though opposing handmade deities (19:26), surely he would not have desecrated his own God's temple.²⁶¹⁰

They accuse Paul of teaching gentiles against *our people* and *law* and temple (21:28), whereas the reader knows precisely the opposite: the charge in Ephesus was that Paul preached against pagan gods and would turn the world from honoring a pagan temple (19:26–27)! Indeed, these critics charge him with undermining the law (21:28) when he is conspicuously observing it (21:26), and even prevent him from completing (*almost completed*, 21:27) his law-honoring act!

As in Ephesus (19:25–27), economics and nationalism intertwined; much of Jerusalem's economy likewise depended on the temple.²⁶¹¹ The temple mount constituted the entire northeast side of the city. Gentile desecrations did sometimes provoke violent riots in the temple (Josephus, *War* 2.224–27; *Ant.* 20.108–12).²⁶¹² The plea for *help* (Acts 21:27) reflects the expectation that Jews were obligated to aid those defending the laws (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.347). Having seen a gentile with him elsewhere, they wrongly supposed that he *had brought him into the temple* (Acts 21:29), and then amplified this unfounded suspicion with the plural *Greeks* (21:28).

In the Herodian temple, stricter understanding of biblical purity codes led to the biblical outer court being divided into three sections. The first was for only Jewish men; outside this, on a lower level, the court for Jewish

²⁶¹⁰ Luke compares the two accounts; cf. J. M. Tripp, "A Tale of Two Riots: The Synkrisis of the Temples of Ephesus and Jerusalem in Acts 19–23," *JSNT* 37 (1, 2014): 86–111.

²⁶¹¹ Fiensy, "Composition," 221–22; see further comment on Acts 6:11–13.

²⁶¹² Violence was more common at festivals (*War* 1.88; 2.224–27; *Ant.* 20.165; caused by Romans in 20.108–12), potentially including Pentecost, cf. *War* 2.42–43; *Ant.* 17.254.

women.²⁶¹³ Outside that, separated from the court of women by a 4-foot-high stone balustrade, was the only place gentiles could enter.²⁶¹⁴ Signs posted in Greek and reportedly Latin warned that gentiles who entered the court of Jewish women would be executed.²⁶¹⁵ Diaspora Jews knew that Roman officials accepted this policy.²⁶¹⁶

Because Paul is Jewish, however, his own presence could not meet Roman standards for such profanation.²⁶¹⁷ “Bringing in” a gentile was a more ambiguous case, but his “unanticipated” death in mob violence could obviate the niceties of any legal transfer to Roman authority. *All the city* (21:30) is good Lukan hyperbole (cf. 19:29); nevertheless, the temple’s massive outer court (172,000 square yards/67,000 square meters)²⁶¹⁸ hosted the largest gathering the city could muster in any single place.²⁶¹⁹ The term translated *aroused* (21:30) recalls the riot in 19:29, 32 (where the NRSV translates it *confusion*). Whether people came from outside the temple before the doors were shut, or more likely, Luke refers to unrest in the temple, the numbers could be considerable (on the city’s population, see comment on Acts 21:20).

To safeguard the temple’s purity, Paul is dragged into the outer court before being attacked (21:30). Throughout the ancient world, bloodshed in a temple desecrated it,²⁶²⁰ and this was no less true of the one God’s temple (Matt 23:35; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.30). Luke’s audience might envision a different ancient idea: invading temples to remove *innocent* suppliants desecrated temples.²⁶²¹ It is Paul’s assailants who truly desecrate the

²⁶¹³ Josephus, *War* 5.198–99; *Ag. Ap.* 2.102–5; *m. Kelim* 1:8–9. This was likely because of the risk of menstrual impurity (*m. Kelim* 1:8).

²⁶¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 3.318–19; *War* 6.426–27; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.8. For divisions of holiness in the ideal temple, cf. 11QT 3–48.

²⁶¹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.417; *War* 5.194; 6.125–26. See the inscriptions (OGIS² 598; *CIJ* 2, §1400) in Carmon, *Inscriptions Reveal*, pp. 76, 167–68, §169; discussion in S. R. Llewelyn and D. van Beek, “Reading the Temple Warning as a Greek Visitor,” *JSJ* 42 (1, 2011): 1–22.

²⁶¹⁶ Philo, *Embassy* 212; cf. Josephus, *War* 6.126. Even Roman soldiers could be executed for desecrating sacred Jewish objects (*War* 2.229–31; *Ant.* 20.117); indeed, to satisfy order, Rome would allow even a tribune’s execution (*War* 2.246; *Ant.* 20.136).

²⁶¹⁷ It might meet the most stringent Jewish standards; see later *m. Sanh.* 9:6 (cf. P. Segal, “The ‘Divine Death Penalty’ in the Hatra Inscriptions and the Mishnah,” *JJS* 40 [1, 1989]: 46–52).

²⁶¹⁸ J. M. Lundquist, “Biblical Temple,” *OEANE* 1:324–30 (329).

²⁶¹⁹ Hengel, “Geography,” 44.

²⁶²⁰ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 14.4.6–7; 38/39.17.1; Silius Italicus 4.791; Dio Cassius 51.15.5; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 28.153; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.166.

²⁶²¹ E.g., Aristophanes, *Knights* 1311–1312; Thucydides 3.81.5; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 29.5; Sulla 31.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.43; Exod 21:13–14.

temple.²⁶²² Nevertheless, the purity-motivated delay and relocation involved in dragging Paul out helps to save his life (21:31–32).

Once word of potential desecration reached the temple officers, Levite gatekeepers²⁶²³ would close *the doors* (21:30). Some of the temple doors were massive, requiring twenty guards to shut them (Josephus, *War* 5.202–5; 6.293). If the supposed gentiles have not been apprehended, closing inner doors might prevent further intrusions and closing outer ones might prevent the intruders' escape.²⁶²⁴ Given recent problems with "assassins" in the temple (21:38), the Levites were undoubtedly ready to shut doors on short notice.

The NT letter Ephesians comports well with Luke's depiction of how Paul's captivity begins: Christians in the Ephesus area (Acts 21:27–29) could perceive Paul as a prisoner for the sake of gentiles (Eph 3:1, 13). In Christ, the temple's barrier was now shattered (2:14), building a new temple that includes gentiles (2:19–22; cf. Isa 56:4–5).

21:31–40: PAUL ENTERS ROMAN CUSTODY

With Paul's arrest by the Romans in Jerusalem, Acts enters its final phase, turning again from Jerusalem to the gentile world, this time to the heart of the empire where Luke's audience lives. Luke omits most of Paul's earlier imprisonments and beatings (2 Cor 11:23), but Paul's years in Roman custody invite apologetic in greater detail.

Still, even in these custody narratives full of apologetic speeches, Luke continues providing engaging and suspense-filled narratives (21:31–36; 22:22–24; 23:10–35; 27:1–28:14), revealing God's protection, which suggests its own apologetic (cf. 28:4–6).²⁶²⁵ Later critics might highlight Paul's execution; Luke emphasizes instead all the deliverances that preceded it. Most importantly, structuring Acts 21–28 as a parallel to his Gospel's passion narrative reminds Luke's audience that the Lord himself faced unjust custody and execution.²⁶²⁶ Likewise, no matter what Luke's

²⁶²² Cf. Cicero, *Sest.* 38.80: Sestius committed no crime by staining the temple with his blood – for others shed it.

²⁶²³ E.g., 1 Chron 9:17–18; Ezra 2:70; 7:7; Neh 7:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.29 (priests).

²⁶²⁴ Doors could be shut for either reason; cf. Polybius 4.18.2, 4; Plutarch, *Cic.* 28.3.

²⁶²⁵ Cf. G. B. Miles and G. Trompf, "Luke and Antiphon: The Theology of Acts 27–28 in the Light of Pagan Beliefs about Divine Retribution, Pollution, and Shipwreck," *HTR* 69 (3–4, 1976): 259–67; D. Ladouceur, "Hellenistic Preconceptions of Shipwreck and Pollution as a Context for Acts 27–28," *HTR* 73 (3–4, 1980): 435–49.

²⁶²⁶ For Paul sharing Christ's sufferings, cf. also Phil 3:10.

audience might face, they would ultimately experience divine vindication one way or the other.

In contrast to Luke's sketchier knowledge of Galilean geography, his familiarity with the outer court's topography suggests firsthand acquaintance:²⁶²⁷ the report literally came *up* (*anabainô*) to the tribune (21:31); the soldiers *ran down* (21:32); and they used *steps* (21:35, 40). The Roman cohort was stationed on the north side of the temple mount in the Antonia Fortress. This fortress was elevated (Josephus, *War* 5.238–39); soldiers could watch from its towers and run down two pairs of stairs into the temple's outer court when they needed to intervene during festivals (*War* 5.242–44).²⁶²⁸

Luke reports at least three versions of what happened: the version of Paul's enemies (24:6a); the tribune's version (23:27); and, most importantly, Luke's own version (21:32–33). The initial claims against Paul to the Romans are false (21:27–29), fitting the pattern of Paul's enemies exploiting mob violence to achieve their ends against him (e.g., 14:5, 19; 17:5; 16:20–22; 19:28–29).

The *tribune* commands the local *cohort* (21:31). By this period, a legion had six tribunes; the senior-ranking tribune was normally a young man of senatorial rank, who may have held the position for a year as a step in his political career. His five colleagues usually held the position somewhat longer and were normally equestrians (the knight class, below senators). Although the tribune here is not even an equestrian (22:28), political and cultural considerations would commend educated Roman citizens to his attention. Likewise, he could not afford to offend local elites; a few years earlier a tribune offended Jerusalem's elite and was executed to assuage their anger (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.136).²⁶²⁹ The centurions under him would be drawn mostly from the ranks of commoners, who would not have future careers in Rome to consider (21:32; 22:25–26; 23:17, 23).

²⁶²⁷ Hengel, "Geography," 27.

²⁶²⁸ For archaeological observations, see, e.g., G. Cornfeld, *Josephus: The Jewish War* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 362–66; G. J. Wightman, "Temple Fortresses in Jerusalem, Part II: The Hasmonean *Baris* and Herodian Antonia," *BAIAS* 10 (1990–91): 7–35; A. Lichtenberger, *Die Baupolitik Herodes des Grossen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 35–39; D. R. Schwartz, " 'Stone House,' *Birah*, and Antonia during the Time of Jesus," pages 341–48 in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 347–48. For one reconstruction, see E. Netzer, "A New Reconstruction of Paul's Prison," *BAR* 35 (1, Jan. 2009): 44–51, 71 (49).

²⁶²⁹ This might be especially the case if he were experiencing resentment against the local culture (analogous to culture shock).

Judea's Roman governor had five cohorts, most stationed in Caesarea but with one in Jerusalem. The cavalry unit (23:23) suggests that this cohort was among the *cohortes quingenarii equitatae*, which had 480 infantry and 120 cavalry.²⁶³⁰ *Centurions* (plural; 21:32) probably suggests also their units, hence at least 120 soldiers.

Paul's unarmed assailants withdraw before the soldiers (21:32),²⁶³¹ and the tribune orders Paul chained even before investigating his crime (21:33). Culturally, chains were a matter of great shame;²⁶³² they could also be painful,²⁶³³ and Romans tended to apply such chaining to harsher forms of custody.²⁶³⁴ Paul's hands are chained, probably to soldiers on either side of him (as in 12:6), as was common.²⁶³⁵

The crowd's accusations, however, are confused (21:33–34; cf. 19:32).²⁶³⁶ Some apparently cry out that he was the Egyptian revolutionary the authorities want to execute (21:38). Most Jerusalemites abhorred both that revolutionary (Josephus, *War* 2.263) and the assassins (*War* 2.255; cf. 7.412–16).

The crowd's outcry *Away with him!* (21:36) parallels the outcries against Jesus in Luke 23:18, 21 (cf. John 19:15). This is the crowd's last recorded cry until its expanded form in Acts 22:22, where it demands Paul's death; in between, Paul attempts to bridge barriers between Jew and gentile (22:1–21).

Paul's polite request to clarify his identity (21:37) gets the tribune's attention. Although tribunes would be fluent in Greek, most were not native Greek-speakers, as this one proves to be ("Lysias," 23:26; 24:22). The issue is likelier the quality of Paul's Greek than the few words he speaks in it. Perhaps one-third of Jerusalem's inscriptions (mostly from middle and upper classes) are in Greek.²⁶³⁷ Two centuries before Paul's time, Judeans opposing hellenization were writing Maccabean literature in high-quality Greek. Greek was also the language of Alexandria and Egypt's

²⁶³⁰ J. B. Campbell, "Auxilia," *BNP* 2:420–21.

²⁶³¹ As one would expect; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.111. The soldiers could be easily provoked (*War* 2.325–28).

²⁶³² Polybius 38.17.2; cf. Eph 6:20; Col 4:18; 2 Tim 1:16.

²⁶³³ Rapske, "Prison," 828.

²⁶³⁴ Rapske, *Custody*, 9, 25–28, 140; Rapske, "Prison," 828; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 18.10.

²⁶³⁵ Rapske, "Prison," 828, cites Josephus, *Ant.* 18.189–237; Ignatius, *Rom.* 5.1; Seneca, *Ep. Luc.* 5.7; *Tranq.* 10.3.

²⁶³⁶ Nor surprising; cf. even a citizen body in Nepos 3 (Aristides), 1.4; civic leaders in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.15.4.

²⁶³⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 78.

metropolitans. Because Greek was the administrative language of Greco-Roman Egypt, all who did not know Greek were classified as “illiterates.”²⁶³⁸ Further, the Egyptian Jew whom the tribune mentions (21:38) was an Egyptian Jew, and Egyptian Jews spoke Greek.

Perhaps Lysias is insulting Paul, by questioning whether he can speak Greek and associating him with Egypt. Proud of their language, Greeks often ridiculed those with inferior Greek grammar.²⁶³⁹ (Similarly, people even today sometimes evaluate speakers’ French or English based on regional accents, with Parisian French, for example, being considered most “pure.”) Speech could also reveal one’s educational and status level.²⁶⁴⁰ One might also compliment the Greek of one not expected to be as eloquent as a Greek-speaker (Pliny, *Ep.* 4.3.5).

Paul has spoken few words, but his accent might be revealing. Many hearers appreciated “pure” accents (Pliny, *Ep.* 6.11.2, for Latin). Average bilinguals are less fluent in their second language, and a person’s accent could betray their origins (cf. Luke 22:59; Matt 26:73). The stereotype, at least, was that Egyptians who spoke Greek did so with a clear Egyptian accent.²⁶⁴¹ Even the Judean aristocrat Josephus complained that his Greek betrayed an Aramaic accent because of his background (*Ant.* 20.263). Paul’s Greek, however, was shaped by growing up in an Asian Greek-speaking home and sharpened by years in Greek-speaking cities, including Achaia (cf. Acts 18:11; 19:8–10; 21:39).²⁶⁴²

Probably someone in the confused crowd (21:32–33) had supplied the misidentification of Paul in 21:38, but it fits this tense period under Felix’s governorship. Recently, an Egyptian Jewish revolutionary had led thousands of Jews (Josephus, *War* 2.261)²⁶⁴³ to attack the Roman garrison in

²⁶³⁸ See T. J. Kraus, “(Il)literacy in Non-literary Papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt: Further Aspects of the Educational Ideal in Ancient Literary Sources and Modern Times,” *Mnemosyne* 53 (3, 2000): 322–42.

²⁶³⁹ E.g., Lucian, *Dem.* 40; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 6.36; also lisps, Hermogenes, *Method* 34.451.

²⁶⁴⁰ E.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 7.25.3–4; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.1.553; *Hrk.* 4.5; Toner, *Culture*, 139–41.

²⁶⁴¹ Lucian, *Ship* 2; cf. G. Mussies, “Greek in Palestine and in the Diaspora,” pages 1040–64 in Saffrai and Stern, *Jewish People* (1056). Sadly, Greeks could also complain of a foreigner speaking Attic words with an Indian accent (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.8.490).

²⁶⁴² Even less educated Athenians were thought to speak better Greek than other Greek-speakers did (Cicero, *De or.* 3.11.43). Some orators had begun reusing Attic Greek; but Paul’s few words here betray no Atticizing (though Judge, *First Christians*, 369–71, suggests that Paul employs educated Koine).

²⁶⁴³ Scholars propose various resolutions to the discrepancy between the four thousand followers in the claim of Luke’s tribune and the thirty thousand in Josephus (a

Jerusalem (2.262) and establish himself in power.²⁶⁴⁴ Felix destroyed most of his following, but the Egyptian himself escaped (2.263; *Ant.* 20.172). Revolutionaries (including the Egyptian) gathered followings in the *wilderness* (*War* 2.259; *Ant.* 20.188), whom both Felix (*War* 2.260) and Festus (*Ant.* 20.188) attacked. The wilderness buffered revolutionaries, ascetics, and prophetic figures from societal intervention,²⁶⁴⁵ and embodied hope of the promised new exodus (Hos 2:14–15; Isa 40:3).²⁶⁴⁶

Also during Felix's tenure, *assassins* (lit. Sicarii) slew victims in broad daylight in Jerusalem (*War* 2.254), especially in the midst of festival crowds (2.255, 425; *Ant.* 20.186–87).²⁶⁴⁷ If the tribune confuses the Egyptian Jewish prophet with the *assassins* (who might be captured in the temple), he may suppose that his “big catch” allows him to do away with all Rome's enemies around Jerusalem at once!²⁶⁴⁸ But it was certainly an era in ferment, as noted above (*War* 2.254–63; *Ant.* 20.186–88), and Judeans often applied this title *assassins* to terrorists or revolutionaries more widely.²⁶⁴⁹ Ironically, Paul, far from belonging to the assassins, becomes their target (cf. Acts 23:12–15), and some officials cooperate with them (23:14–15) – just as Jesus's accusers preferred the release of an insurrectionist (Luke 23:18–19, 25).

discrepancy long noted, e.g., by H. Grotius and N. Lardner). Josephus often inflates figures, and the lower casualty figures in *Ant.* 20.171 suggest that the numbers in *War* 2.263 are inflated (or a transcriptional error).

²⁶⁴⁴ His proposal to make Jerusalem's walls fall (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.170) suggests a Joshua, new-Moses figure. For attempts to become royal figures, see *Ant.* 17.271–76, 278–85; *War* 2.56, 433–34; 7.29–31, 36, 153–55. See further Webb, *Baptizer*, 333–39, 348, on “leadership popular prophets.” He led them to the Mount of Olives; for its eschatological significance, see comment on Acts 1:12.

²⁶⁴⁵ 1QS 8.13–14; 1QM 1.2–3; 10.13; 1 Macc 2:29–30; Josephus, *War* 2.259; 6.351; *Ant.* 20.97–98, 167–68, 188; *Life* 11; Luke 1:80; 3:2, 4; 7:24; 9:12; cf. W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus* (New York: Columbia, 1956), 114–22; G. Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978), 48–50.

²⁶⁴⁶ Cf. also T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1963), 15–19; D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), *passim*.

²⁶⁴⁷ They struck a high priest (Josephus, *War* 2.256) and were killing others regularly (2.254–57; *Ant.* 20.208–10). Ironically, Josephus claims that it was Felix's use of dagger-assassins to eliminate a contentious high priest (*Ant.* 20.163–64) that spread the assassins (20.165); but his source here might be slander.

²⁶⁴⁸ Festus later attacks Sicarii as they followed a “deceiver” promising them deliverance (*Ant.* 20.188).

²⁶⁴⁹ See *War* 4.400, 516; 7.253–54, 262, 275, 297, 311, 410–15, 437, 444; *Ant.* 20.185–87, 204, 210; M. A. Brighton, *The Sicarii in Josephus's Judean War: Rhetorical Analysis and Historical Observations* (SBLJL 27; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2009), 141–50; *idem*, “The Sicarii in Acts: A New Perspective,” *JETS* 54 (3, Sept. 2011): 547–58 (esp. 556). For the wider Latin sense from which Judean usage drew, see Tjara, *Trial*, 70; esp. Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.12.

Paul explains his good Greek (21:37) by his Tarsian citizenship (21:39; his Roman citizenship would not address that question). Tarsus was known for its educational attainments. Many see Paul's response to the tribune's suggestion as indignantly denying inferior, Egyptian status²⁶⁵⁰ (but note Moses's Egyptian learning in 7:22). (Alexandrian Jews tried to identify with Greeks and avoid being classed with local Egyptians.)²⁶⁵¹ Yet the revolutionary is clearly an Egyptian Jew (21:38), and Paul has reason, regardless of status considerations, to distance himself as far as possible (as far from Egypt as Tarsus) from a revolutionary of any sort!²⁶⁵²

Ancient speakers often underlined their cities' status with the phrase translated *an important city* (21:39).²⁶⁵³ Place of origin was normally one of the first questions people asked of each other when meeting.²⁶⁵⁴ Civic pride was common,²⁶⁵⁵ including in Tarsus of Cilicia,²⁶⁵⁶ which was a "free city."²⁶⁵⁷ Lying on a major trade route, Tarsus was heavily involved in trade²⁶⁵⁸ and was wealthy.²⁶⁵⁹ Heavily hellenized for centuries, Tarsus was one of antiquity's most esteemed university centers, known for philosophy²⁶⁶⁰ and rhetoric.²⁶⁶¹ The river Cydnus flowed through the city.²⁶⁶² Cilicia tended to be friendly toward Judea,²⁶⁶³ and many Jews lived there.²⁶⁶⁴ Jewish people throughout most of the empire were loyal to the cities where they lived as well as to their ancestral homeland of Jerusalem.²⁶⁶⁵

²⁶⁵⁰ For disdain of Egyptians in this period, see, e.g., Polybius 15.33.9–10; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.41.

²⁶⁵¹ Cf., e.g., Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.70–72, 85, 99, 132–33, 137, 139, 142.

²⁶⁵² Conzelmann, *Acts*, 183–84.

²⁶⁵³ The Greek form uses litotes (cf. similarly Josephus, *Life* 1; Menander Rhetor 2.12, 422.11–12; 2.14, 426.30; 427.3–4), as common in Acts. Some envision a specific, learned allusion to Euripides, *Ion* 8, although the phrase was now more widespread.

²⁶⁵⁴ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 19.104–5; Sophocles, *Oed. Col.* 206; Euripides, *Cycl.* 102, 275–76; *Hel.* 86; *Iph. Taur.* 495, 505; *Rhes.* 682; Pindar, *Pyth.* 4.97–98; Gen 16:8; 29:4; 42:7.

²⁶⁵⁵ See Pindar, *Isthm.* 1.1–6; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 66.26; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.12; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 58–62.

²⁶⁵⁶ See Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.17; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:206; Jones, *Chrysostom*, 71–82.

²⁶⁵⁷ Pliny, *Nat.* 5.22.92; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.7–8, 39; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 5.7.

²⁶⁵⁸ Charlesworth, *Trade Routes*, 79; Casson, *Travel*, 129.

²⁶⁵⁹ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.2.

²⁶⁶⁰ Strabo 14.5.13–15; cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.1.120; 7.7.179.

²⁶⁶¹ Strabo 14.5.13; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.5.571, 577.

²⁶⁶² Justin, *Epit.* 11.8.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.17; Quintus Curtius 3.5.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.7.

²⁶⁶³ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.145–46; *War* 1.88.

²⁶⁶⁴ Philo, *Embassy* 281; *CII* 2:39–48, §§782–95; 2:137, §931.

²⁶⁶⁵ See Gruen, *Diaspora*.

Some commentators deny that Jews like Paul's family could be Tarsian citizens, but this suspicion rests on mistaken assumptions. While Tarsus did not grant citizenship to all Jews, individual exceptions are well-attested.²⁶⁶⁶ Individuals could purchase citizenship in most cities; in Tarsus the primary requirement was 500 drachmae (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.21–23).²⁶⁶⁷ Paul's father could hardly have afforded a prominent Jerusalem teacher like Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)²⁶⁶⁸ unless the family was fairly wealthy and prominent.²⁶⁶⁹

Others doubt that one could be both a Tarsian and Roman citizen, but this doubt assumes earlier customs, neglecting first-century evidence.²⁶⁷⁰ Some Tarsians did become Roman citizens,²⁶⁷¹ and certainly those who were already Roman citizens (such as Paul's family) could also become Tarsians.

Recognizing the accusations as a case of mistaken identity, the tribune allows Paul to address the crowd (21:39–40), presumably expecting him to clear up the case of his identity and so restore order (21:36). Some commentators doubt that Paul could have given a speech after the crowd's beating (21:32). But Luke would surely reveal Paul's injuries if they were so severe (cf. 5:40–41; 14:19–20; 16:23–34). Paul offers a defense speech soon after (24:11) that would have been a matter of official public record (24:10–21), and we should hardly expect this zealous preacher to have neglected an opportunity to preach to his city.²⁶⁷²

Eloquent or high-status speakers could quiet a crowd (19:35);²⁶⁷³ the status in this case stems from Paul's obvious authorization to speak by the tribune (21:40). Since a Greek temple-desecrator (21:28) and Egyptian Jewish revolutionary (21:38) are incompatible categories, members of the confused crowd may now await clarification. Once Paul speaks Aramaic, they quiet further (22:2); this is obviously no Greek, and Aramaic gives him

²⁶⁶⁶ See Philo, *Embassy* 155–57; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.119, 125–26; *Ag. Ap.* 2.37–39; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 127; Rapske, *Custody*, 77–83; Barclay, *Jews in Diaspora*, 63–71, 271. Religious practice and citizenship were not related; cf. Krauter, *Bürgerrecht*.

²⁶⁶⁷ Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 5–6, 98–99 n. 43.

²⁶⁶⁸ Or at least the level of hellenistic as well as Jewish education Paul's letters almost certainly presuppose.

²⁶⁶⁹ On honorary citizenship grants, see, e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.114.1; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 38.1; 41.2; Philostratus, *Ep. Apoll.* 62.

²⁶⁷⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 83–84; idem, "Citizenship," 215; Riesner, *Early Period*, 148; *OCD*³ 335.

²⁶⁷¹ Ramsay, *Cities*, 227; Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 5.

²⁶⁷² Others, including myself, have continued preaching even during some beatings.

²⁶⁷³ E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 4.35; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 46.10; Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.20.

more local credibility than belonged to the Greek-speaking accusers of 21:28 (now unable to understand him). If in an age of microphones we cannot envision addressing large assemblies, even when located above them, ancients report quite different experiences.²⁶⁷⁴

Like Luke's explicit revelation of Paul's Roman citizenship only in 16:37, Luke trots forth Paul's bilingual versatility only here. He presents new qualifications of Paul as needed, supplying the impression of a mere sample of a potentially more extensive catalogue of proficiencies. Still, if Paul grew up in Jerusalem (22:3), he stood a good chance of learning his friends' local language alongside his family one, and his work in Scripture probably included study of Hebrew, which would greatly simplify acquisition of Aramaic (children can learn language by immersion like native speakers). This supposition fits Paul's "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil 3:5; cf. 4 Macc 16:15).

Some scholars suggest that Luke literally means here *Hebrew*, the sacred and literary language. That could make Paul's fluency simpler to explain, but while Torah teachers used Hebrew as a living language, it was not the vernacular (note translation into Aramaic as early as Neh 8:8).²⁶⁷⁵ Moreover, whenever this or analogous phrases for *Hebrew language* appear in the NT with Greek transcriptions, the words transcribed are Aramaic rather than Hebrew, where we can tell the difference.²⁶⁷⁶ Mark often includes recollections of Jesus's Aramaic as if these are holy *ipsissima verba* of the Lord.²⁶⁷⁷

A Closer Look: Paul in Roman Custody²⁶⁷⁸

Historically, Paul expected potential conflict in Judea (Rom 15:31); we next find him in Roman custody. This is a custody that Luke is at pains to

²⁶⁷⁴ Cf. also Benjamin Franklin's experimental conclusion that on a clear day over thirty thousand people could hear George Whitefield at one time, many from a great distance (Noll, *History*, 93).

²⁶⁷⁵ See Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 80–84; A. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 85–102; M. Wilcox, "Semitic Influence on the New Testament," *DNTB* 1093–98. Note Aramaic in Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26; Dan 2:4–7:28; 2 Macc 15:36; and even many of the Qumran scrolls.

²⁶⁷⁶ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 701.

²⁶⁷⁷ Paul apparently taught some Aramaic to his churches (Rom 8:15; 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 4:6), and he had likely been speaking Aramaic frequently since entering Jerusalem, including with the four Nazirites. He may have also previously shared his conversion testimony periodically with Aramaic-speakers in Syria (cf. Acts 13:1).

²⁶⁷⁸ On Paul in custody, see Tajra, *Trial*; M. L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21–28* (SBLABib 13; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), for a valuable narrative approach; for background, esp. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*.

explain, and that he thus unquestionably did not simply invent (cf. Phil 1:13–17; Phlm 9–10).

The texture of the defense scenes of 21:40–26:32 (esp. chs. 24–26) differs from the first three-quarters of Acts. Now Luke's apologetic focuses on the legal aspect at the point in his story where it becomes most historically appropriate. Earlier charges in Acts (e.g., 16:19–21; 17:5–9; 18:12–17) merely foreshadow Paul's long custody here.

Virtually no one today envisions Paul as inciting sedition against Rome, a portrait incompatible with his letters, so it is historically implausible for us to concede the accusers' case against him. But that is more easily said today, when his letters weigh more heavily than the shadow of his execution by a powerful state. Luke's apologetic for Paul counters conventional assumptions about a detainee's guilt, hence offers a more realistic appraisal of miscarriages of justice.

Some of Luke's contemporaries were apparently scandalized by Paul's long custody (Phil 1:17; 2 Tim 1:8, 16); if he was innocent, why did not God deliver him (cf. Luke 23:35, 37, 39; Acts 28:4)? Acts replies that in many *earlier* cases, God *did* deliver him.²⁶⁷⁹ If God afterward used captivity to permit him to testify before Jewish and gentile rulers (Acts 9:15; 25:12; 26:2, 7, 13, 19, 26–27), no one should complain. ****

22:1–21: PAUL'S DEFENSE IN THE TEMPLE

Consistent with the elders' desire, Paul expresses his solidarity with Jerusalem (21:20–25; cf. 1 Cor 9:20), though he will not compromise the gentile mission (Acts 22:21). He first establishes his pious Judean credentials, gaining a hearing for his encounter with Jesus.²⁶⁸⁰ Even these credentials and his revelatory claim, however, cannot compensate for his interest in gentiles that – in the context of the charge (21:28) and the current climate in Jerusalem – provoke the riot's resumption.

This speech portrays Paul as speaking extemporaneously (as in 14:14–17), here fulfilling Jesus's promise that the Spirit would give his servants the words at their defenses (Luke 12:11–12; 21:14–15). Extemporaneous speech

²⁶⁷⁹ Historically, Paul did experience rescues that he considered divine (2 Cor 1:10; 11:23).

²⁶⁸⁰ Paul's Judean background is clear (note "Hebrew of Hebrews" and esp. Pharisaism in Phil 3:5).

was highly prized,²⁶⁸¹ and a number of orators regarded it as particularly difficult.²⁶⁸² Although Paul is preparing to answer the charge of 21:28 when interrupted (22:21–22), his main interests in his narrative introduction are building rapport and preaching Christ.²⁶⁸³

Paul sought to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost (20:16), and expects Felix to understand what he means by his coming twelve days earlier (24:11). Luke does not specify the date because the riot and speech probably do not coincide precisely with Pentecost (cf. 21:26–27), but this is Paul's "Pentecost" speech.

So why was Peter's Pentecost speech so much more "effective" than Paul's (2:41; 22:22)? Paul's audience is not hostile to hearing about Jesus, but they are hostile to hearing about gentiles. For Paul, however, a gospel that does not unite believers in Jesus across ethnic lines is no gospel at all. Luke may imply that, had *Paul's* Pentecost speech been heeded, Jerusalem might have turned from the path that led to its destruction by gentiles in 70 CE. Like Jesus, Paul foresaw the dangers of Jerusalem's current path (Luke 21:24).²⁶⁸⁴ But as in Luke 19:44, Jerusalem failed to recognize the time of its visitation.

Bridging Horizons: Ethnic Conflict

The East African Revival, which stirred massive church growth from the 1930s forward, began in Rwanda. Yet in 1994 the Rwandan genocide claimed up to eight hundred thousand lives. In 1997–99, an ethnic-political war in Congo-Brazzaville displaced tens of thousands of civilians. I knew that story all too well because one of those refugees, Dr. Médine Mousounga, afterward became my wife.

Tragically, the Christian presence in those countries did not prevent ethnic strife and even genocide. The same is true for European wars and colonialism or the US slave trade and genocide against Native Americans. Many Christians loved across ethnic lines, but many others ignored the

²⁶⁸¹ See, e.g., Seneca, *Controv.* 4. pref. 7; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.3.1–3; Suetonius, *Gramm.* 23; *Tib.* 70.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* 1.24.529.

²⁶⁸² Cf. Plutarch, *Demosth.* 8.3–4; 9.3; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.482; 2.9.583; 2.26.614; see further comment on Acts 14:14–17. Being able to embellish speeches during delivery was also important (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 53).

²⁶⁸³ He often starts with the former (17:22–29) but never omits the latter (17:30–31).

²⁶⁸⁴ Paul may have already known that Jerusalem would not receive his message (Acts 22:18–21), but Jesus wanted him to testify in Jerusalem now (21:13–14; 23:11), before Paul's mission to Rome (cf. 28:26–28).

prior demands that Jesus's Lordship should have made on their ethnic ties. Some African churches may have inherited this gap in understanding some implications of the gospel from the West, which has its own history of racism. Ethnic reconciliation and unity in Christ is not optional to the gospel. Nationalistic and ethnic prejudice were blind spots that Paul would not tolerate (cf. Acts 15:1–2; Gal 2:14; 3:28). ****

A Closer Look: Paul's Defense Speeches

Lengthy defenses were popular in histories as well as in novels.²⁶⁸⁵ This section of Acts is detailed partly for the same reason that Paul's brief ministry in Philippi is treated in greater detail than his substantially longer ministry in Corinth: the author of the "we" material was nearby (20:5–28:16).²⁶⁸⁶

Although Paul's intention in the narrative world is partly evangelistic (24:25; 26:27–29), Luke himself may recount these speeches to offer his audience tools for defending themselves against widely circulated slanders (cf. Phil 1:7, 30). Luke seeks to vindicate Paul (and thus the gentile or Diaspora Christian movement of which he was the leading figure) against misconceptions: though Jesus, Peter, and Paul were executed, they challenged only corrupt Judean leadership (now discredited in any case by the war), and did not seek to subvert the peace of the empire.²⁶⁸⁷

That differences remain despite Luke's desire to parallel figures fits Luke's role as a historian. Paul's defense speeches conspicuously contrast with Jesus (Luke 23:9; cf. 22:67–69; 23:3). Unlike Jesus, Paul does not

²⁶⁸⁵ See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 16.92–120, 338–50; 17.99–123, 230–47; *War* 1.622–38. While these are probably elaborated (Keener, *Acts*, 1:258–319, esp. 301–4; on Tacitus, 272 n. 125, 276–77, 303, 308), the occasions are not; cf. speech summaries in *Ant.* 14.141–42; 16.362–66 (and the related speech of 16.379–83); the corporate issue in 18.257–60; *War* 5.530. Clearly Josephus felt free to create (e.g., *Ant.* 1.317–19) or expand (2.100–4; 6.219) defense speeches where his sources lacked them, but sources such as Nicolaus of Damascus and more recent reports would provide much information. See likewise Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.34–35; 6.5; 14.42–45, 48–49; 15.20–22. Where Tacitus has less interest, proceedings are merely summarized (e.g., 1.74; 3.17, 22–23, 38; 6.49); cf. Tiberius's speech (3.12) before a trial summary (3.13–16).

²⁶⁸⁶ It strains plausibility to suppose that the narrator left Paul just before this point yet returned just in time for the voyage in 27:1–2. If the narrator vanishes where he is not mentioned, he fell overboard after 27:29 (except for the summary mention of 27:37), only to wash up on the same shore as the ship's other survivors in 28:1.

²⁶⁸⁷ Most scholars recognize the apologetic focus; see, e.g., B. M. Rapske, "The Lukan Defense of the Missionary Prisoner Paul," *TynBul* 44 (1993): 193–96.

deliberately provoke his execution. Paul has more confidence in receiving justice, and fares better with the Romans, than his predecessors.

Whereas most speeches before Acts 20 are deliberative and evangelistic, the setting of these speeches is forensic. Paul insists that he neither teaches apostasy from Judaism in the Diaspora (21:22, 28; 24:14–15; 26:5–6, 22–23), which might stir unrest, nor is a revolutionary (24:5, 12, 18). Spontaneous speeches like 22:3–21 will not display as many formal rhetorical traits as more formal defense speeches (such as 24:10–21; 26:2–29); nevertheless, Paul calls even his initial speech in 22:1 a “defense” (*apologia*), hence a forensic defense speech (as in 25:16).²⁶⁸⁸

Ancient defense speeches vary considerably, when not interrupted. Nevertheless, they normally share a rudimentary form: introduction; body (answering charges, proofs, and claiming innocence); conclusion (reaffirming innocence); closing narrative and verdict.²⁶⁸⁹ Others show how closely Acts' speeches fit handbook examples of defense speeches, including emphasis on the speaker's *êthos*, or character (22:4–5; 23:1; 24:14–17; 26:4–5), appeal to witnesses, probabilities, and the like.²⁶⁹⁰ I highlight some specific rhetorical strategies at the relevant passages in the commentary. ****

This commentary will focus mostly on the elements of Paul's testimony not already noted in 9:1–18, but retellings with variations and different perspectives are important for Luke's story.²⁶⁹¹ Paul's opening *Brothers and fathers, listen* (22:1)²⁶⁹² evokes the opening of Stephen's speech (7:2); Paul could have met the same fate. Speakers could call out, as in 22:1, and then speak once the crowd grew quiet (22:2–3; cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.16.3–4).

²⁶⁸⁸ Witherington, *Acts*, 668; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 704; J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), 329.

²⁶⁸⁹ F. Veltman, “The Defense Speeches of Paul in Acts,” pages 243–56 in Talbert, *Perspectives*, 251–52. Interruptions were common (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 18, 1432b.35–40; 1433a.14–18).

²⁶⁹⁰ See J. H. Neyrey, “The Forensic Defense Speech and Paul's Trial Speeches in Acts 22–26: Form and Function,” pages 210–24 in Talbert, *Luke-Acts*, 220–21; D. Hogan, “Paul's Defense: A Comparison of the Forensic Speeches in Acts, *Callirhoe*, and *Leucippe and Clitophon*,” *PRSt* 29 (1, 2002): 73–87; M. Quesnel, “Analyse rhétorique des discours d'apologie de Paul: Ac 22 et 26,” pages 155–76 in Berder, *Actes des apôtres*, 166; Keener, “Rhetorical Techniques.”

²⁶⁹¹ See further Maloney, *Narration*.

²⁶⁹² Appeals to *listen* (22:1) were appropriate in defense speeches, as elsewhere (e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 19, 1433b.19–23).

Although Paul cannot deny his Diaspora birth (no longer an advantage as it was in 21:39), he dwells on what will commend his message to this audience. Dwelling on advantageous points or what one's audience appreciated was recommended rhetorical practice,²⁶⁹³ as was building rapport with one's audience.²⁶⁹⁴ In addition to speaking their language, Paul builds rapport by trotting out his orthodox credentials, including training under a famous teacher and displays of zeal for the law (22:3–5).²⁶⁹⁵

Just as Alexandria was a favored destination for advanced study of rhetoric, Jerusalem was the ideal location for a Diaspora Jew to study Torah.²⁶⁹⁶ Tarsians often completed education abroad, so Paul could have done merely tertiary education in Jerusalem. But *brought up* in Jerusalem (as well as *educated* there; 22:3) probably indicates that his studies in Jerusalem began earlier; nor was he the only member of his family to move there (23:16). Citing extensive ancient sources, W. C. van Unnik long ago established how commonly these three verbs (*born, brought up, educated*) appear together as three periods in one's background, evidenced even elsewhere in Acts (7:20–22).²⁶⁹⁷ Paul's letters indicate clear Judean connections (Gal 1:13–14, 22–23), especially given the lack of Pharisees in the Diaspora (Phil 3:5). His facility in Greek intellectual discourse meanwhile suggests rigorous training, and in Judea this was available only in Jerusalem. Jerusalem offered training in Greek thought and rhetoric, though not on the level available in Athens, Alexandria, Ephesus, or Tarsus.²⁶⁹⁸

Jewish education in Scripture began from early childhood.²⁶⁹⁹ Gifted boys from sufficiently prosperous families might proceed to tertiary study

²⁶⁹³ E.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.30, 1367b; *Rhet. Her.* 4.45.58; Theon, *Progymn.* 5.52–56.

²⁶⁹⁴ Cf., e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1436b.17–19, 38–40; 1437a.1–1438a.2; 36, 1442a.22–1442b.27.

²⁶⁹⁵ See more fully here Keener, *Acts*, 3:3207–22.

²⁶⁹⁶ Paul's most advanced training was in Scripture (cf. Gal 1:13–14), albeit (as his letters reveal) especially in its LXX form; see Légasse, "Career," 375–77; Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 35–37. Paul's letters suggest tertiary training (R. F. Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education," pages 198–227 in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* [ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003], 208, though Hock thinks it in rhetoric, 209, 215).

²⁶⁹⁷ W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem* (London: Epworth, 1962), 44. After noting the subject's birth, an orator would address his rearing and education in turn (Menander Rhetor 2.1–2, 370.28–372.2); in biographies, see, e.g., M. Beck, "Lucian's *Life of Demonax*: The Socratic Paradigm, Individuality, and Personality," pages 80–96 in *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome* (ed. K. De Temmerman and K. Demoen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 93.

²⁶⁹⁸ Hengel, *Acts and History*, 81; Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 34–35; cf. *Let. Aris.* 121. Cf. Lieberman, *Hellenism*; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*.

²⁶⁹⁹ Philo, *Embassy* 210; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.173–75; *m. Abot* 5:21; *t. Hag.* 1:2; 2 Tim 3:15.

in early to mid-teens, when viewed as adults.²⁷⁰⁰ Josephus, a first-century Jew from a fairly well-to-do priestly family, seems to have had a fuller Greek education than Paul, yet he emphasizes as more important his people's laborious training in the law and Scripture interpretation (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.264–65). Some continued their studies for many years (e.g., Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 108.5), but more commonly even those with tertiary education began their careers by their late teens (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 5.8.8). As a Pharisee, Paul would have been schooled in ancestral laws and traditions (Gal 1:14). Pharisees were known for this training,²⁷⁰¹ and for being “strict” in their interpretations, as here.²⁷⁰² Although Luke is from the Diaspora, he correctly depicts typical Judean instruction as sitting at the teacher's feet (Luke 10:39; Acts 22:3).²⁷⁰³

A Closer Look: Gamaliel

Though himself a Pharisee, Gamaliel's family became highly respected members of the municipal aristocracy (5:34; cf. Josephus, *Life* 190–92, 309; *Ant.* 20.213, 223; *War* 4.159). Some question whether radical young Saul (Acts 7:58–8:3) could have been a disciple of moderate Gamaliel (5:34–39), but students did not embrace all approaches of their teachers (cf. Josephus, *Life* 10–12). Even Shammaite Pharisees might want to study with the famous Hillelite Pharisee Gamaliel.²⁷⁰⁴ Gamaliel's own son was not always moderate (*Life* 190–96). Most importantly, it is Luke himself who depicts Gamaliel's moderation. The resulting tension is likely deliberate: Saul, who finds himself kicking against the goads (Acts 26:14), learns the hard way that “fighting against God” (5:39) is useless.²⁷⁰⁵

In support of the connection historically, a Diaspora novelist could simply invent a name, whereas Luke gets correct the name of a prominent Pharisee in the right generation. As Luke himself is from the Diaspora, his likeliest source for that information is his connection with Paul himself. If Paul was “advanced . . . beyond” many of his peers (Gal 1:14), study with a prominent teacher is likely; Paul's letters reveal that he could argue

²⁷⁰⁰ Josephus, *Life* 10; Safrai, “Education,” 953.

²⁷⁰¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297, 408; 17.41.

²⁷⁰² Acts 26:5; Josephus, *Life* 191; *War* 2.162.

²⁷⁰³ *m. Abot* 1:4; cf. the Hebrew text of *m. Abot* 2:7; one interpretation of *m. Sabb.* 18:1; followers could be at one's feet (Judg 4:10; 8:5 MT).

²⁷⁰⁴ At this level, disciples normally chose their teachers (Josephus, *Life* 10–12; *m. Abot* 1:6).

²⁷⁰⁵ Both sayings reflect and probably evoke the same work of Euripides.

Scripture with the best of his contemporaries. The educational level suggested by Paul's letters also comports with this portrait, as does his status as a Roman citizen (see Acts 16:37). Paul's facility in the LXX fits Gamaliel's household better than that of any other of which we know. After 70 CE, rabbis allegedly forbade teaching Greek (*m. Sotah* 9:14; cf. *m. Abod. Zar.* 1:20), yet excepted the household of Gamaliel's grandson, because they dealt with Rome (*t. Sotah* 15:8).²⁷⁰⁶ In short, if Paul studied with a great teacher, why not Gamaliel? ****

Paul even builds rapport with his audience's (violently expressed) zeal for the law in 22:3–4 (cf. Gal 1:13–14). Many young Judeans followed violent, nationalistic models of zeal in this period,²⁷⁰⁷ including some Pharisees.²⁷⁰⁸ Persecuting to the point of death recalls his agreement with Stephen's execution (8:1), "breathing murder" (9:1), and favoring executions (26:10). *Binding* (22:4; cf. 9:2) may evoke for his hearers his own state (21:33).

The current high priest Ananias was not the high priest who commissioned Paul in 9:1 (Caiaphas), but the elders (22:5) likely shared collective memory about Saul's exploits. Although Paul's speech is interrupted after his narrative introduction (22:22), it anticipates forensic proofs, as was expected for appropriate narrative introductions. Against false accusations (21:28), he does not oppose the law or temple (22:3–5, 12, 17). That Paul's audience hears out his claims about Jesus appearing (cf. also 23:9) suggests the success of the Jerusalem church's witness (21:20) – although association with gentiles becomes one bridge too far (22:21–22).

That Paul was pursuing his task *about noon* (22:6), when most people were resting in the shade,²⁷⁰⁹ indicates the mission's urgency, thereby underlining his zeal for it. Paul is blinded by a light beyond sunlight (22:11; 26:13), but blindness at noon was a biblical judgment (Deut 28:28–29).

Paul's hearers will recognize *Saul* (22:7) as a Jewish name, but mostly only his Ephesian accusers (Acts 21:27), who will not understand his

²⁷⁰⁶ Some also parallel some halakic concerns in Paul and Gamaliel; cf. B. Chilton and J. Neusner, "Paul and Gamaliel," *BBR* 14 (1, 2004): 1–43; idem, "Paul and Gamaliel," *RRJ* 8 (2005): 113–62.

²⁷⁰⁷ See Num 25:11–13; 2 Kgs 10:16–17; Sir 45:23; 48:2; 1 Macc 2:24–27, 50–58; 4 Macc 18:12; Philo, *Conf.* 57; *Mos.* 1.303–4; *Spec. Laws* 3.126; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.271. See more fully Keener, *Acts*, 3:322–25; idem, *Galatians* (Cambridge, 2018), 52–53; Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 341–46.

²⁷⁰⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4, 9.

²⁷⁰⁹ E.g., *Vit. Aes.* 6; *Jos. Asen.* 3:2/3; comment on Acts 8:26; 10:9.

Aramaic, know him as Paul (whose reputation may have preceded him; 21:21). It is now roughly a quarter century since Saul's conversion – before many of his hearers were born. *Jesus* (Joshua) was a common Jewish name; *of Nazareth* (22:8; contrast 9:5; 26:14) specifies which one, though not all appreciated this epithet (6:14; 24:5; cf. John 1:46).

As in Acts 9:7, Paul's companions receive only partial revelation, but here they do not even *hear the voice* (22:9), in contrast to 9:7. Since the verb can also mean “understand,” it is possible that they heard a sound but not an intelligible one, just as they saw light (22:9) but not a person (9:7).²⁷¹⁰ Variations in ancient historians' own works also suggest that most historians did not trifle over differences of minor detail. The point in any case is selective revelation (cf. 10:40–41; Dan 10:7).

Saul's question, *What am I to do?* (Acts 22:10) parallels questions, often about salvation, elsewhere in Luke-Acts (2:37; 16:30; Luke 3:10, 12, 14; 10:25; 18:18). The Lord's command to go to a Diaspora city in 22:10 prepares for his command to go . . . *to the Gentiles* in 22:21.

Damascus's church consisted initially of fugitives from Jerusalem (cf. 8:1, 4; 9:2; 11:19), probably the origin of Ananias here. Luke now reports Ananias's corroboration of Saul's calling (22:14–16); *to all the world* (22:15) is strategically more ambiguous than Paul's controversial calling to gentiles reserved until 22:21 (9:15). Saul becomes a witness of what he has seen and heard (22:15; cf. 4:20; Luke 2:20; 7:22), like Stephen (22:20). He has seen and heard the Lord in 22:7–8, and this experience continues in visions (22:18; 26:16; cf. 2:17; 9:12; 16:9–10; 18:9; 26:19; 27:23; 2 Cor 12:1, 9).²⁷¹¹ Luke vaguely echoes here some OT revelatory language (hears, knows, sees; Num 24:16).

Why do you delay? (22:16; cf. 4 Macc 6:23; 9:1) urges action (cf. Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 6 [Commonplace], 14); baptisms normally immediately followed (or coincided with) conversion (2:38; 10:47–48), so the point is that nothing should now prevent baptism (8:36; 10:47). Baptism concretely expresses and accompanies *calling on his name* (2:21, 38).²⁷¹² Baptism was a

²⁷¹⁰ Classical usage could even make this probable (cf. Arator, *Acts* 2; Bede, *Comm. Acts* 22.9), but Luke is writing in Koine, not classical, Greek, and the speech is supposed to be in Aramaic.

²⁷¹¹ For direct knowledge and vision of God in ancient sources, see Keener, *John*, 1:234–43, 247–50.

²⁷¹² Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 47 (ACCS-Acts, p. 272): calling on Jesus's name shows His deity, since it is unlawful to “call on” the name of “anyone else except God.” On Jesus and exalted figures, cf., e.g., Keener, “Parallel Figures,” esp. 105–10.

sort of washing, like other ancient ritual lustrations;²⁷¹³ here it signifies purification from sin as an act of repentance (2:38; Mark 1:4–5; Luke 3:3; 24:47; cf. Rom 6:3–6; 1 Cor 6:10; Col 2:12; Tit 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21). The middle voice in *be baptized* (Acts 22:16) probably invites Paul's participation in baptism; most baptism was probably self-administered (dunking oneself forward) in any case.²⁷¹⁴

In the temple, where Paul's audience would expect only a true vision,²⁷¹⁵ Paul again sees Jesus, as Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple (Isa 6:1). Prayer fits the setting of some other significant visions in Luke-Acts (Acts 10:9, 30; 11:5; cf. Luke 3:21–22). The speech again rehearses briefly the story of Paul's past (Acts 22:19–20).²⁷¹⁶ The beatings (22:19) could be within synagogues (Matt 10:17; 2 Cor 11:24; *m. Mak.* 3:10–13) or as torture to compel believers to repudiate their dangerous views (cf. Acts 26:11). That Paul was *approving* of Stephen's killing (22:20) echoes 8:1, and probably of the devout's approval of their ancestors killing the prophets (Luke 11:48; cf. Rom 1:32). Paul now builds toward a defense not only of himself but also of Stephen: Paul was seized for the same reasons as Stephen (6:13–14; 21:28), begins his speech like Stephen's (7:2; 22:1), and is a witness like Stephen (22:15, 20).²⁷¹⁷

Against commentators who suppose that narrating a call to the gentiles in the temple conflicts with Luke's narrations that place it earlier, Luke portrays multiple affirmations of Paul's calling (e.g., 18:9–10; 23:11; 27:24), starting with his conversion (26:17). Paul had many visions (2 Cor 12:1–9), and Luke's audience would be familiar with multiple reaffirmations of calling (cf., e.g., Gen 12:1–3, 7; 13:15–17; 15:5, 7, 18; 17:8; 18:18; 22:17–18). Although Paul could not deny going to the gentiles (cf. Acts 21:28; 21:21–22), he could assure his audience that he had offered to minister to Israel instead (22:19–20); yet he could not disobey a divine vision (22:21; 26:19). Rhetorically, this constitutes an argument from necessity, common in defense speeches (e.g., Hermogenes, *Issues* 76.5–7; 77.20–78.21), like

²⁷¹³ See comment at Acts 2:38. Texts about sacrificial cleansings (Lev 14:19, 31; 16:30) and washings (Num 8:21) encouraged a metaphoric use of the image elsewhere (Josh 22:17; Ps 19:12 [LXX 18:13–14]; 51:2 [LXX 50:4, 9]; Prov 20:9; Jer 2:22; 33:8 [LXX 40:8]; Ezek 36:33; 37:23; Sir 23:10; 38:10; *Ps. Sol.* 3:8; 1QS 11.14).

²⁷¹⁴ As in usual Jewish lustrations.

²⁷¹⁵ Cf. Luke 1:22; 1 Sam 3:3–10; 1 Kgs 3:5; *Jub.* 32:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.282–283; 2 *Bar.* 34:1–36:1.

²⁷¹⁶ This retelling is frequent in Acts; Greeks had long used stories within stories (cf. also Judg 11:16–22; 2 Sam 11:21).

²⁷¹⁷ With Tannehill, *Acts*, 100. Stephen's blood was "shed," like that of the prophets and Jesus (Luke 11:50; 22:20).

Peter's defense in Acts 11:5–17. *Far away* (22:21) might recall 2:39 and thereby Isa 57:19.

Although 22:21 climaxes Paul's narrative introduction (*narratio*), for Luke it may function as something like a rhetorical thesis statement (*propositio*), by implying where the speech was headed. Historically Paul emphasized salvation for gentiles (e.g., Rom 1:13–16; 3:29; 10:12; 15:18; Gal 1:16; 2:8–9; 3:8, 14, 28; Eph 3:6, 9), but this was not a popular message for Jerusalem at this key point in history.²⁷¹⁸ If even fellow believers mistrust him (Acts 21:21), Paul might expect many (except perhaps believers) to reject his message here; Paul ends up as prepared to die for his testimony as Stephen was (7:51–60).

Far from being a revolutionary (21:38) or following an anti-Roman Messiah (5:36–37), Paul seeks to reverse his people's course of confrontation with Rome (cf. Luke 6:27–30, 35; 19:43; 21:20–21). Although Paul is commanded to be a witness to all (22:15), Jerusalem would reject his testimony (22:18), and does so (22:22);²⁷¹⁹ yet Paul has been faithful (20:22–24; 21:13; 23:11). Jerusalem would face judgment (Luke 19:41–44; 21:20–21) for rejecting God's messengers (13:33–35; 23:46; Acts 7:60; 12:2). Like some others (9:13–14; 10:14; Exod 4:1; Jer 1:6), Paul questions what he is hearing (Acts 22:19–20).

22:22–29: DISCOVERING PAUL'S CITIZENSHIP

As in 19:35–40, voices of order intervene, although these are initially less favorable toward Paul. Ironically, the crowd's rejection of Paul for honoring gentiles (22:21–22) is nearly the cause of his scourging by gentiles. But as Paul in 22:2–5 (cf. 23:3–6) establishes his pious Jewish credentials, here he establishes his honorable Roman ones (22:25–28).

Paul's Ephesian accusers had not interrupted previously because they could not understand or match Paul's Aramaic; it would hardly credit them to denounce in Greek someone potentially viewed as more "Judean" and "orthodox" than themselves! But now the crowd's *Away with him!* (21:36) becomes more explicitly, *from the earth!* (22:22), just as the passion's crowd's "Away" (Luke 23:18) escalates into "Crucify him!" (23:21).

²⁷¹⁸ Contrast more favorably Luke 2:32, earlier in Luke's story.

²⁷¹⁹ The vision probably addressed the short-term response (9:29), but ironically it ends up fulfilled again now (Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 48.1).

Throwing off their cloaks (Acts 22:23) recalls Stephen's stoning (7:58; 22:20), and perhaps responds to what hearers deem blasphemy against God's honor (14:14). *Tossing dust* (22:23) might substitute for stones (cf. 2 Sam 16:13; 2 Macc 4:41), though ancient mobs often procured stones when they needed them,²⁷²⁰ including in the temple area.²⁷²¹ Probably more directly relevant, tossing dust expresses mourning (Job 2:12),²⁷²² sometimes conjoined with rending clothes (Josh 7:6; 2 Sam 13:19; Job 2:12; 1 Macc 11:71). Most relevant, dispersing dust signifies repudiation, here from shaking out the garments they have removed, contaminated by Paul's blasphemy (Luke 9:5; 10:11; Acts 13:51; 18:6).²⁷²³

The crowd's reaction (22:22) ironically confirms Paul's own warning about rejection (22:18), as in Stephen's case (7:51, 54; cf. 13:41, 45). Luke reports the interruption only after he has finished recounting what is needed for his narrative (cf. 2:37; 10:44).²⁷²⁴ Against those who suppose the riot Luke's invention, however, he would hardly invent complications for his own apologetic (24:5).²⁷²⁵ Crowds often shouted down those with whom they expected to disagree (cf. 19:33–34).²⁷²⁶

Probably not understanding Aramaic, Lysias the tribune (who is probably Greek) will not suppose that Paul's Aramaic speech is pro-gentile; like a rabble-rouser, Paul has reignited the crowd. Lysias thus resumes the original plan (21:34, 37) to bring Paul *into the barracks*, the Antonia Fortress (22:24) – which ironically becomes a place of refuge for Paul (23:10; cf. 23:16, 32).²⁷²⁷ The Antonia citadel was sometimes used for detention (Josephus, *War* 1.118), but it included some pleasant quarters, apparently including some third-story rooms.²⁷²⁸

²⁷²⁰ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.59.1; 9.48.2; Pausanias 2.32.2; 8.23.7; in a synagogue, Josephus, *Life* 303.

²⁷²¹ Josephus, *War* 4.200; cf. also Acts 5:26; John 8:59; 10:23, 31; earlier, 2 Chron 24:21.

²⁷²² Cf. Homer, *Il.* 18.23–25; *Od.* 24.316–17; Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.4.6; 5.3.4; Lam 2:10; Ezek 27:30; 4 Bar. 2:2–3; Philo, *Embassy* 228; Josephus, *War* 2.322; *Life of Adam and Eve* 31:3; 36:1; 40:2.

²⁷²³ W. J. Larkin, *Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 323; this action may repudiate gentile defilement (see comment on 13:51).

²⁷²⁴ On this literary convention in ancient historiography, see D. L. Smith, *Rhetoric of Interruption*, 27–166; in Luke, 186–210. Luke may highlight the last words recounted.

²⁷²⁵ Indeed, local believers in less hospitable environments were often more comfortable when Paul left town (9:25, 30; 17:10, 14; cf. 20:1, 16), though his boldness reflects the Spirit's inspiration (4:29–31).

²⁷²⁶ Cf. Cicero, *Fam.* 1.2.2; Livy 3.49.4.

²⁷²⁷ Skinner, *Locating Paul*, 117; cf. 23:27.

²⁷²⁸ Netzer, "Reconstruction," 49; see Josephus, *War* 5.241.

The governor would have to try the case,²⁷²⁹ but he would expect Lysias to investigate. Interrogators commonly secured information by scourging, especially for slaves²⁷³⁰ but when necessary for any non-Romans.²⁷³¹ Having just escaped beating by a Jewish mob, Paul is now to be beaten by his rescuers! Centurions often supervised special assignments,²⁷³² here the low-status sort of interrogation unit “designated ‘torturers’” in Roman sources.²⁷³³ Stripping Paul for the flogging, soldiers would have torn whatever remained of his clothes from the riot (21:30–32).²⁷³⁴ Now they stretch him out *with thongs* (22:24) for the flogging (cf. 4 Macc 9:11–12).

Older and more informed than when beaten with lictors' rods (16:22), and faced with a far more dangerous, potentially deadly beating,²⁷³⁵ Paul speaks up (22:25). His Roman citizenship was not germane to his good Greek in 21:38–39, might weaken his appeal to the nationalistic crowd, and might prove fruitless during a riot; now, however, was the strategic moment to appeal to it. Paul has also learned the value of putting officials, too hasty to assume that Jews could not be Romans, in a compromised position (16:37–39).

The Valerian and Porcian Laws had once exempted citizens from this beating entirely (cf. Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.63.163); they still exempted them from such torture before conviction.²⁷³⁶ Corrupt governors had ignored citizenship claims,²⁷³⁷ but the tribune is not a governor²⁷³⁸ and Paul is exquisitely polite. Citizenship might take time to prove (see comment on 16:37), but few risked the severe penalty for lying about it. If all else failed, Paul would be treated as a Roman citizen until his claim could be confirmed in the records of Tarsus.²⁷³⁹

²⁷²⁹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 54.

²⁷³⁰ See, e.g., *Rhet. Her.* 2.7.10; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.67; 4.29.

²⁷³¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 139.

²⁷³² J. B. Campbell, “Centurio,” *BNP* 3:127–28 (127); e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.10; Luke 23:47.

²⁷³³ Rapske, *Custody*, 265.

²⁷³⁴ Rapske, *Custody*, 219. Since prisons did not supply clothes, he would likely be wearing these until friends could supply his needs (cf. 23:16; 24:23).

²⁷³⁵ Rapske, *Custody*, 139. One form of whip included metal balls at the end of iron chains; another, knucklebones and lead woven into the end of a leather strap (Tajra, *Trial*, 73).

²⁷³⁶ Rapske, *Custody*, 139.

²⁷³⁷ Cicero, *Verr.* 1.5.13; 2.1.3.7–9; 2.3.3.6; 2.3.24.59; 2.4.11.26; 2.5.62.162–65; 2.5.66.169–70; Josephus, *War* 2.306–8.

²⁷³⁸ Rome treated tribunes more severely than governors; see, e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.246–47; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.18. Likewise, a governor could present Paul in chains (Acts 26:29), whereas Lysias dare not (22:29).

²⁷³⁹ See Rapske, *Custody*, 131–33; Witherington, *Acts*, 682–83 (following Sherwin-White, *Society*, 146–49).

Since the tribune has inadvertently breached procedure, he must now assess Paul's status among citizens. Had Paul achieved citizenship like Lysias himself – through bribery? The emperor Claudius reportedly bestowed citizenship freely and almost indiscriminately, originally for large sums but eventually less expensively (Dio Cassius 60.17.5–6). Lysias paid much; perhaps Paul acquired his more cheaply? Claudius's successor, Nero, cracked down on cases of corruption with the previous administration's imperial favors (e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.50), suggesting that Luke's report of Paul's recollections fits the narrow window of time during Claudius's rule (41–54 CE).²⁷⁴⁰

Although Luke does not specify the connection, the tribune's name, "Claudius Lysias" (23:26), supports this picture. The name "Claudius" reveals that Lysias became a citizen between 41 and 54 CE; new citizens normally took the name of the emperor under whom they were enfranchised.²⁷⁴¹ Tribunes were normally born Roman equestrians;²⁷⁴² this one – happily for Paul (22:28–29) – was not.²⁷⁴³ Lysias found no matter for embarrassment here; the governor himself was a freedman, not equestrian, and notoriously corrupt.

Paul's *I was born a citizen* (22:28) probably reflects the Greek equivalent of a technical Latin phrase, *ingenuus*.²⁷⁴⁴ Normally a status by birth was higher than one acquired; status affected judicial outcomes, and Paul has higher citizenship status than Lysias!

Scholars propose various reasons why Paul's ancestors received Roman citizenship. Most common for Jews was that many became citizens when freed as Roman slaves in the first century BCE;²⁷⁴⁵ many of these Roman Jews emigrated eastward when in 19 CE Tiberius temporarily expelled Rome's Jewish community. Given ancient prejudices, Luke lacks reason

²⁷⁴⁰ Cf. Sherwin-White, *Society*, 154–56; W. W. Gasque, "The Book of Acts and History," pages 54–72 in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology* (ed. R. A. Guelich; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 57.

²⁷⁴¹ E.g., Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 2:237; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 127, 170. Dio Cassius 60.17.7 notes some exceptions.

²⁷⁴² J. B. Campbell, *Army*, 56–57; though some were promoted through the ranks. Sufficient wealth could allow the purchase of this status (cf. *OCD*³ 551).

²⁷⁴³ Provincials could be enrolled as citizens on enlistment in legions (*OCD*³ 334), but this privilege did not extend to auxiliaries like those in Judea. Military service provided status within the empire.

²⁷⁴⁴ Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 68.

²⁷⁴⁵ With Légasse, "Career," 372.

to highlight freedperson ancestry, but Paul may well be a third- or fourth-generation citizen (cf. 6:9).

22:30–23:10: THE DIVIDED COUNCIL

Before transferring Paul's case (cf. 25:26), Lysias needs expert Jewish counsel, and he seeks it in the Council (22:30). Indeed, Roman administrators normally tried only those who were formally accused, and depended especially on local authorities for charges against troublemakers.²⁷⁴⁶ If their preliminary inquiry produces a strong case against Paul, Lysias can be less anxious about having chained him; otherwise, Lysias will need to argue that he rescued Paul (23:27). Presumably the Council gathered regularly, like other civic bodies, and the tribune, who would expect the local senate to maintain order, would be able to supersede anything else on their docket.²⁷⁴⁷

Lysias would not have far to transport Paul. Josephus and later tradition locate the Council's meeting place near the temple, probably at a site fewer than 500 meters from the Antonia.²⁷⁴⁸ Now Lysias sets Paul *before them* (22:30); according to later but plausible tradition, the Council sat in a semicircle so they could see each other (*m. Sanh.* 4:3).

Whereas the high priest acts unjustly, Paul, the accused, proves a model of Scripture-quoting piety. Paul divides the Council, and makes apparent to the Roman officer observing the incident that the real grounds for opposing him are theological, namely, his mainstream, Pharisaic belief in resurrection. The one "charge" to emerge for the Roman case file is thus that Paul is the object of prejudice for his theological convictions (23:29; 24:20–21; cf. 25:18–19).

Throughout Acts, Paul's message of the gospel divides audiences (e.g., 14:4), just as Jesus promised that his message would do (Luke 12:51–53). Here Paul's message divides the Council. By maneuvering the issue of the debate, Paul secures (although nearly at the cost of his life) a charge that will stand him in good stead before Roman authorities in 24:20–21.

²⁷⁴⁶ Cf., e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.97; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47.

²⁷⁴⁷ The term translated *ordered* (22:30) can mean "urge," but probably Lysias has a higher view of his own authority than they do.

²⁷⁴⁸ Josephus, *War* 5.144; McRay, *Archaeology*, 110; J. Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 109; R. E. Brown, *Death*, 350.

Paul's hearings in this section of Acts parallel those of Jesus in the Gospel. Of course, they are not identical, since Luke's historical material limits his presentation; but a comparison with Mark reveals how the parallel in Acts helps structure his selection and presentation of material in his passion narrative.²⁷⁴⁹

Mark	Luke	Acts
14:53: Council	22:66: Council	22:30–23:10: Council ²⁷⁵⁰
15:2: Pilate	23:1: Pilate	24: Felix
–	23:8: Herod Antipas	25: Festus
–	23:13: Pilate again	26: Herod Agrippa II

Paul's hearing before the Council also recalls those of the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 4:7–22; 5:27–41) and Stephen (6:12). A Pharisee in the Council defended the Jerusalem apostles (5:34–39) just as Pharisees end up defending an apostle here (23:9; cf. the pious Sanhedrist in Luke 23:50–51). But whereas the Council marvels at the boldness of the less educated Peter and John (Acts 4:13), Paul himself is an exegetically trained Pharisee (23:6). Ironically, Paul now is interrogated by the very body before whom he once apparently approved of Stephen's condemnation (Acts 6:12; 7:58).

Building common ground with the pious faction of the Council at each point that he speaks, Paul labors to present his fidelity to God and his law (23:1, 3, 5–6). Establishing one's *êthos*, or character, was essential in all sorts of legal hearings; one would extol one's favored side and vilify the other, and this strategy could shape a case's outcome.²⁷⁵¹ Appealing to one's entire past life (23:1; 24:16) was helpful; a person never before charged, or at least never convicted, would be presumed more likely innocent.²⁷⁵² To accuse people of known virtuous character can ultimately reflect badly on the accuser.²⁷⁵³ Paul's outward observance of the law's prescriptions was blameless even before his conversion (Phil 3:6; 1 Tim 1:13).

²⁷⁴⁹ With Goulder, *Type*, 40.

²⁷⁵⁰ The next day (22:30) is not necessarily dawn, but given the usual work Roman and aristocratic Jewish workday, it is likely that the tribune's summons was sent out not long after dawn.

²⁷⁵¹ E.g., Isaeus, *Nicost.* 27; *Dicaeog.* 46; Cicero, *Rosc. com.* 7.21.

²⁷⁵² E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 16.10, §146; Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.8.4; *Apol.* 3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.58.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 46.7; Sus 27.

²⁷⁵³ E.g., Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.8.9–10; Cicero, *Vat.* 10.25–26.

Ananias, high priest (23:2) at this time, from c. 47 to 58 or 59 CE,²⁷⁵⁴ illegally abuses Paul (23:2); *strike* is the same term (*tuptô*) used for the crowd beating Paul (21:32). Other sources reveal that Ananias sometimes engaged in contested political activity,²⁷⁵⁵ and that he was known for corruption.²⁷⁵⁶ Superiors sometimes struck social inferiors,²⁷⁵⁷ and Sadducees were known to deal harshly with offenders (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.199).²⁷⁵⁸ Yet striking someone was a legally punishable offense.²⁷⁵⁹

The blow invites a piously biblical rebuke from Paul (23:3). Announcing that *God will strike* Ananias, who commanded Paul struck, follows the conventional view of divine punishment fitting the crime.²⁷⁶⁰ “God is going to strike you” may resemble the invocation, “May God strike you” reportedly often used in court adjurations to secure testimony, yet reckoned as a curse.²⁷⁶¹ Grammatically, however, Paul is pronouncing judgment rather than formally cursing;²⁷⁶² it is *you* that *God* will strike, he replies. A few years later, nationalists in fact targeted and killed Ananias.²⁷⁶³

Luke’s audience would appreciate Paul’s courage in shaming tyrannical abuse (23:3).²⁷⁶⁴ Paul shares Peter’s boldness, but unlike him is hardly “uneducated” (4:13). Jerusalem’s aristocrats, however, did not appreciate warnings of judgment (see Josephus, *War* 6.300–4); avenging a perceived affront to his honor, Ananias will have a vendetta against Paul (Acts 24:1; cf. 25:2).

Paul cites the law as forbidding such mistreatment;²⁷⁶⁵ on trial for law-breaking (21:28), Paul reverses the charge against an opponent.²⁷⁶⁶

²⁷⁵⁴ See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.103, 179; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 128, 170–71.

²⁷⁵⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.131–36, 209. For his continuing power, cf. *Ant.* 20.213; somehow shared, *War* 2.243 (cf. 240, 256; *Ant.* 20.163–64).

²⁷⁵⁶ Bribery in *Ant.* 20.205, 209, 213; exploitation of poorer priests in 20.206–7. For aristocratic priestly corruption generally, see, e.g., 1QpHab 9.4–5; 12.8; Josephus, *Life* 216; *Ant.* 20.181, 206; *T. Mos.* 5:4; 2 *Bar.* 10:18; *T. Levi* 14:1; 15:1; *t. Menah.* 13:21.

²⁷⁵⁷ Homer, *Il.* 2.265; Xenophon, *Anab.* 5.8.12–13; John 18:22.

²⁷⁵⁸ Pharisees were more lenient (*Ant.* 13.294), and also prohibited judging alone (*m. Abot* 4:8), as Ananias does here.

²⁷⁵⁹ *Hamm.* 202–6; *P. Hal.* 1.203–5; *m. B. Qam.* 8:6; *OCD*³ 759.

²⁷⁶⁰ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 20.62.2; Sir 27:25–27; 2 Macc 4:38; 9:5–6; 13:7–8; *LAB* 44:9–10; 1QpHab 11.5, 7, 15; 12.5–6; *m. Abot* 2:6/7; *Sipre Deut.* 238.3.1.

²⁷⁶¹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 717; Le Cornu, *Acts*, 1242, citing *m. Sebu.* 4:13. Insults were common in rhetoric (*Invect. Sall.* 5.13; Cicero, *Phil.* 2.12.29; Plutarch, *Cic.* 27.1).

²⁷⁶² Augustine, *Sermon on Mount* 1.19.58; Bede, *Comm. Acts* 23.3.

²⁷⁶³ Josephus, *War* 2.426–29, 441–42.

²⁷⁶⁴ E.g., Maximus of Tyre 3.7; 15.6; Sir 48:12; Luke 20:16–19, 46–47.

²⁷⁶⁵ Cf. Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17.

²⁷⁶⁶ Cf. analogously Socrates, accused of disbelieving the gods, believing in them more than any of his accusers do (Plato, *Apol.* 35D).

Prudently answering an interrogator's challenge in court could shame the interrogator himself (Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.5–6). Establishing his *êthos*, as in Acts 23:1, Paul also underlines his own orthodoxy (as in 23:5–6); as a Pharisee, Paul undoubtedly knows the law better than this Roman-appointed high priest. *Whitewashed wall* evokes Ezek 13:10–15 (and 22:28; cf. CD 8.12), suggesting hypocrisy (cf. Luke 6:42; 12:1, 56; 13:15; 20:20). Though Paul does not retaliate physically, neither does he welcome the shame of the blow; for Luke, this behavior may qualify what Luke 6:28–29 expects: nonviolence, but not *absolute* nonresistance. Paul's words will also reinforce for the observing tribune the impropriety of these initial proceedings.

Ignoring Ananias's illegal order, bystanders hypocritically accuse Paul of violating biblical protocol (23:4). Paul responds by claiming ignorance (23:5). Paul would not know Ananias personally, and Ananias would not be wearing his cultic vestments in a meeting of the Sanhedrin.²⁷⁶⁷ Nevertheless, with most scholars, Paul likely feigns ignorance ironically, demonstrating that he can play at his critics' game: he does not owe straightforward answers to those who have shown themselves more committed to power than truth. Further highlighting his pious *êthos*, he quotes the exact Scripture on which any prohibition of insulting the high priest would be based.²⁷⁶⁸

Paul's mistreatment and biblical answers may win some sympathy from the more fair-minded Pharisees (23:6), themselves also grieved by the high priests' common abuse of power. One could protest the *real* cause for opponents' accusations (Aeschines, *Timarchus* 1–2).

Winning over members of a divided assembly was sometimes a clever stratagem.²⁷⁶⁹ In a master stroke of strategy, Paul "divides and conquers" the Council by identifying with one (albeit probably the minority) faction,²⁷⁷⁰ over an issue that Rome will regard as purely theological. He can draw on the *êthos* (character portrait) he has been building through his appeals to Scripture and his victimization by the corrupt leadership. Paul in effect reshapes the debate's terms, hence the initial hearing's outcome, protecting himself with regard to Roman law at future hearings (23:28–29;

²⁷⁶⁷ Cf. 1 Sam 21:9; Ezek 44:19; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.94.

²⁷⁶⁸ Exod 22:27 (ET 22:28); cf. respect for rulers or priests in Prov 24:21; Sir 7:29–31; 41:17; 4Q417 f2.1.1. Luke employs *leader* (*archôn*, "ruler") for anyone in the ruling establishment (Luke 23:13, 35; 24:20; Acts 4:5, 8; 13:27).

²⁷⁶⁹ See Josephus, *Life* 139, 142–44; *War* 2.604–11.

²⁷⁷⁰ Rhetorically, identifying one's case with a higher cause could seek allies; cf. Aeschines, *Tim.* 1–2; *Rhet. Her.* 4.35–47.

24:20–21). While his strategy proves effective, it also proves dangerous: after Paul divides the Council, he is nearly “divided” himself (23:10).

Pharisees (Acts 23:6) were more popular with the people than were Sadducees (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.296–98), certainly more in touch with nationalist sentiments than were the Sadducees (cf., e.g., *Ant.* 17.41, 44, 46; 18.4, 23), known to stick together (*War* 2.166; cf. *Ant.* 13.294), and often in conflict with Sadducees.²⁷⁷¹

Division between Pharisees and Sadducees became particularly contentious around some key issues, one of which was belief in the resurrection (Acts 23:8; Luke 20:27),²⁷⁷² clearest in Dan 12:2. This was probably the dominant view in Judea²⁷⁷³ and held by at least some in the Diaspora.²⁷⁷⁴ Paul’s *hope of the resurrection* (Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6–7; 28:20) reflects familiar language (2 Macc 7:14).

Paul affirms his Pharisaism on the basis of genuinely shared eschatology here, not on the law, though he had Pharisaic expertise in the law (Phil 3:5–6).²⁷⁷⁵ Precisely because the resurrection was at the heart of the Christian message, Sadducees who became Christians would have to surrender their theological identity (cf. 4:1–2); Pharisees, however, could continue to affirm their Pharisaism while following Christ (Acts 15:5).

Because the Pharisees affirmed postmortem survival (23:8), they can allow that *a spirit or an angel has spoken to him* (23:9),²⁷⁷⁶ and thus that Jesus really did speak to Paul (22:7–10). Sadducees did not deny all angels, since they accepted the Torah (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297), where angels often appear, but they denied afterlife (18.16), hence posthumous, angel-like existence. The Pharisees’ “verdict,” *We find nothing wrong with this man*,

²⁷⁷¹ *Ant.* 13.293; 18.17; *m. Yad.* 4:7; *tos. t. Hag.* 3:35; *Nid.* 5:3.

²⁷⁷² E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.16; *War* 2.164–65; later, cf. *m. Sanh.* 10:1.

²⁷⁷³ See, e.g., *Ps. Sol.* 3:12; 15:12–13; *1 En.* 22:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.14; *War* 2.163; 3.374; *Ag. Ap.* 2.218; *2 Bar.* 30:1; 42:8; 50:2; *LAB* 3:10.

²⁷⁷⁴ *2 Macc* 7:9, 11, 14, 22–23, 29; 12:43; 14:46; *Ps-Phoc.* 102–4.

²⁷⁷⁵ For Pharisaic expertise in the law, see Josephus, *War* 1.110, 162; *Life* 191. Some earlier German approaches played down Paul’s fidelity to the law, but the New Perspective(s) and Paul within Judaism approaches find it more comfortable. Earlier, cf. Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, 111; W. M. Ramsay, *Pauline and Other Studies in Early Church History* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1906), 89–90; W. D. Davies, *Introduction to Pharisaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1967), 27–28.

²⁷⁷⁶ For “angelic”-style resurrection bodies, see *1 En.* 104:3–4; *2 Bar.* 51:10; Luke 20:36; cf. Dan 12:3; *1 Cor* 15:40; they remain, however, *bodies* (Josephus, *War* 2.163; Luke 24:37, 39). Luke’s point here, however, is probably an angelic-like intermediate state (Acts 23:9; cf. 12:15; *1 En.* 39:4–5).

fits not only Paul's opening claim (Acts 23:1) but verdicts favoring Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14, 22) and others regarding Paul (Acts 25:25; 26:32; 28:21).

Against those who suppose division and altercations within the Sanhedrin plausible, within two years of the scene described here, the high priestly faction (mostly Sadducees) and other aristocrats influential with the people (perhaps including Pharisees) began clashing not only with words but with hurled stones (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.180; later, 20.213).²⁷⁷⁷ Here Luke may envision Pharisees trying to pull Paul to safety while others attacked him; ancient writers sometimes depicted people being nearly torn in mob scenes.²⁷⁷⁸

Now for the second time the tribune orders Paul's rescue from physical abuse (21:31–32); he will not underestimate the next threat (23:23).

23:11–22: LEAKING A PLOT

Ironically, Luke portrays Paul's accusers as the true enemies of Roman justice and order. Likewise ironically, Paul's Roman custody facilitates his safe escape from Jerusalem (23:11–35) and his mission to Rome (19:21; Rom 1:13; 15:23–25).

In 23:11, as in 18:9–10, the Lord encourages Paul at night to speak courageously for him, preparing him for tests to come.²⁷⁷⁹ Perhaps countering critics of Paul's captivity (cf. 2 Tim 1:8, 16), Luke three times uses the Greek term *dei*, implying divine necessity, for Paul's journey to Rome (19:21), twice in the Lord's encouragements to remember the plan in the face of dangers here (23:11) and in 27:24.²⁷⁸⁰

God preserves Paul from many "plots" (9:23–24; 20:3, 19), including the particularly detailed one here. The assassins' conditional vow of abstinence²⁷⁸¹ contrasts starkly with Paul's honorable involvement with vows in 18:18 and 21:23–26 (cf. Luke 22:16–18; fasting in 5:33–35; Acts 13:2; 14:23). Vows were promissory oaths. Oaths called deities to witness,²⁷⁸²

²⁷⁷⁷ For raucous scenes in the Roman Senate, cf. Diodorus Siculus 40.5a.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.20.3–4; 6.5.4–5.

²⁷⁷⁸ Cf. Polybius 18.46.11–12; Livy 33.33.1–2; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 74.8; Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.33.

²⁷⁷⁹ *Keep up your courage* reflects a common exhortation (e.g., Homer, *Il.* 24.171; *Od.* 4.825; Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 810), including in Jewish texts (Gen 35:17; Tob 7:18; Bar 4:5), often on funerary inscriptions (*CIJ* 1:86, §123; 2:118, §891).

²⁷⁸⁰ See Tannehill, *Acts*, 292.

²⁷⁸¹ Cf. *m. Sebu.* 3:1; *Abot* 3:13. Mutual oaths helped preserve plots' secrecy (*Ant.* 15.282; 20.77).

²⁷⁸² E.g., Homer, *Il.* 1.273; 14.158; Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 646–48; Exod 20:7.

thereby inviting these deities' vengeance against those who profaned their names by violating the oaths.²⁷⁸³ The term translated *oath* here explicitly invites a curse against themselves if they break it. Ironically, on the narrative level they condemn themselves to death; yet also ironically, Paul's escape preserves their lives from a suicide attack (cf. similarly 27:24, 42–43).²⁷⁸⁴

Most ironically, not Paul (21:38) but his enemies are assassins. As in Paul's earlier attacks on Jesus's followers (22:5; 26:12), Luke implicates Paul's high-status accusers in this plot (23:14; cf. 25:3). The participation of some would also be ironic, since aristocratic priests were major targets of such assassins!²⁷⁸⁵ Assassins' access to some members of the Council suggests some nationalist connections there.²⁷⁸⁶

The chief priests had every incentive to make this request, with or without any of them being privy to a plot: in the initial preliminary inquiry, Lysias had come away with only a religious charge unrelated to profaning the temple, and that would surely secure Paul's acquittal before a Roman judge (23:28–29). To evade another inquiry before the Sanhedrin was thus to Paul's long-term advantage; the plot to kill him, ironically, will facilitate this escape (23:20–23, 30).

Although forty might not outnumber Paul's guards (cf. 21:32; 23:23), it would prove sufficient for a lightning suicide attack targeting only the unarmed Paul.²⁷⁸⁷ Unlike attackers in 21:30–32 and 23:10, these assailants are armed. From the Antonia to the council chamber was probably fewer than 1,500 feet.²⁷⁸⁸ The route ran by the outer court of the temple, however, where many could gather without suspicion, whereas guards marching in columns on this route might allow just one or two on either side of (and chained to) Paul.²⁷⁸⁹

²⁷⁸³ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 3.276–80; Euripides, *Med.* 752–55; Polybius 3.25.7–9; Livy 10.38.10; 21.10.9; Plutarch, *Lys.* 8.4; Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11; 1 En. 6:4–6; *t. Hag.* 3.33; *Sabb.* 13:5; *Sipra Vayyiqra Dibura Denedabah* par. 4.7.3.2; *Qedoshim* par. 2.199.1.6.

²⁷⁸⁴ After their ultimate failure, they presumably sought release from the vow; cf. *m. Ned.* 3:1–3; *Sebu.* 3:1.

²⁷⁸⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.208–10; *War* 2.256, 426.

²⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.409; 5.6; *Ant.* 20.130–31, 199.

²⁷⁸⁷ Conspiracies could include fifty (Justin, *Epit.* 16.5.13); eighty was considered enormous (Nicolaus, *Aug.* 19).

²⁷⁸⁸ See Finegan, *Archeology: Jesus*, 109; McRay, *Archaeology*, 110. If the Antonia extended even further south (Netzer, "Reconstruction," 48–51), the distance could be even shorter.

²⁷⁸⁹ Guards could maintain greater distances when prisoners were not a threat (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.31).

Deadly intra-Jewish intrigues were apparently common in these final years before Jerusalem's fall.²⁷⁹⁰ Deception and treachery pervaded the political maneuvering of some of the Jerusalem elite in this period, and also of the revolutionaries;²⁷⁹¹ ambushes were common.²⁷⁹² Yet contact with potentially uncooperative members of the Council (cf. earlier Luke 23:50–51) would risk leaks, which were quite common,²⁷⁹³ sometimes even from a reluctantly drafted conspirator.²⁷⁹⁴ Leaks from large assemblies were inevitable.²⁷⁹⁵

Paul's family likely settled in Jerusalem when he was young (22:3); earlier hostility to Paul (9:29) may have shamed them, but whether or not they became believers, at least some of them continued to value him (23:16).²⁷⁹⁶ Nephews were among the closest relatives, next to children.²⁷⁹⁷

Access to prisoners (23:16) was at the discretion of guards, who often required bribes.²⁷⁹⁸ Given Paul's Roman citizenship and protective custody, a relative, probably also a citizen, would probably gain quick (albeit supervised) access to Paul, though more normally before sundown.²⁷⁹⁹ Paul's quarters were probably fairly comfortable. While restoring the temple, Herod made the fortress as lavish as a palace, including baths (*War* 1.401; 5.241). His access to centurions (24:23; 27:1), here as a respectable conduit to Lysias, also suggests his status.²⁸⁰⁰

Paul sends his nephew on to the tribune (23:17). Although remaining discreet, for his nephew's subsequent safety (23:17–19),²⁸⁰¹ Paul can sufficiently trust Lysias (23:17; cf. 23:10); losing a prisoner in custody (along

²⁷⁹⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.163; *Life* 192–93, 196–98, 216.

²⁷⁹¹ See, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 20.163; *Life* 106–7, 148, 216; *War* 2.450–54, 534; 5.100, 402. Felix was no different (*Ant.* 20.161).

²⁷⁹² *War* 4.538; 5.317; *Life* 321, 400–1, 405–6.

²⁷⁹³ Justin, *Epit.* 3.1.6; 7.4.7; Nepos 4 (Pausanias), 5.1; Velleius Paterculus 2.88.2–3; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2.4; Suetonius, *Aug.* 10.3; Neh 4:12; Josephus, *War* 2.560–61.

²⁷⁹⁴ Artapanus in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.16; slaves in Livy 4.45.2; 32.26.9, 14; cf. *m. Ned.* 3:4.

²⁷⁹⁵ The Sanhedrin in Josephus, *Life* 204; Rome's Senate, Valerius Maximus 2.2.1a.

²⁷⁹⁶ For the loyalty of nephews and parents' siblings, cf., e.g., Gen 14:14–16; Lev 25:49; 1 Sam 14:50; 1 Chron 27:32; Tob 1:22; 11:18; later, *Lam. Rab.* 1.5.31. Further on kin ties, see, e.g., Aeschylus, *Prom.* 39; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.60.

²⁷⁹⁷ Isaeus, *Apollodorus* 22, 43–44; Lysias, *Or.* 3:6, §97; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.18.4; 5.8.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.48.

²⁷⁹⁸ See Rapske, *Custody*, 381–83.

²⁷⁹⁹ Rapske, *Custody*, 381–82; cf. 148, 265.

²⁸⁰⁰ Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.37; cf. 2.67; 13.9; 14.64; 15.61; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.202–3, 230–31; Rapske, *Custody*, 31.

²⁸⁰¹ Assassins were daily killing Jews suspected of Roman sympathies (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.187).

with, likely, some guards) would embarrass him. Lysias also needs discretion (23:22): his hurrying Paul to the governor to avoid a murder plot (23:30) must avoid revealing knowledge that any local leaders are complicit. Meanwhile, Luke's "inside information"²⁸⁰² underlines for his readers the sheer hypocrisy of the charges against Paul (24:5–6a).

Taking one *by the hand* (23:19) was a sign of welcome, kindness, and assurance.²⁸⁰³ Lysias has seen enough directly (23:10, 29) to believe the nephew's information.²⁸⁰⁴

23:23–30: SENDING PAUL TO FELIX

Whenever possible, Luke presents Roman authorities in a generally positive light. Here Rome's agents, whatever their motives, become proactive on Paul's behalf (what Luke calls favor; cf. 2:47; 7:10). As in other ancient historians, some details (such as *nine o'clock*, 23:23) serve no evident theological purpose, but offer dramatic detail and a witness's (here probably Paul's) information.²⁸⁰⁵ Nevertheless, they contribute to Luke's overall theological depiction of God's providence and plan for his gospel through unexpected means.

Only the governor could try a Roman citizen on capital charges, but that eventuality now becomes urgent. Lysias must spirit Paul to a safer location before the Sanhedrin requests an interview the next day (23:20), or risk appearing to spite the Sanhedrin by sending him after refusing their request.²⁸⁰⁶ Paul is *ready . . . to die in Jerusalem* (21:13); his enemies are *ready* to kill him (23:15, 21), and Lysias orders his defenders to *get ready* (23:23). Night escapes (as in 9:25; 17:10) were most discreet, although even armies normally marched at night only for the advantage of surprise.²⁸⁰⁷

²⁸⁰² Luke would have access to the basic account from Paul once Paul's Diaspora coworkers reunite with him in Caesarea.

²⁸⁰³ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 19.415; 24.398, 410; Polybius 29.27.6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.2.1; Valerius Maximus 1.7.5; Quintus Curtius 3.6.12; 3.12.17; 4.2.17; 6.7.35; Plutarch, *Coriol.* 23.5; *1 En.* 71.3; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.219; *Life* 370; C. S. Keener, "The Pillars and the Right Hand of Fellowship in Galatians 2:9," *JGRCJ* 7 (2010): 51–58 (51–55).

²⁸⁰⁴ Otherwise, a "mere" boy might not be believed concerning a conspiracy (Quintus Curtius 6.10.15).

²⁸⁰⁵ Rapske, *Custody*, 154; Rapske, "Travel," 12.

²⁸⁰⁶ Offending Jerusalem's difficult elite was impolitic; less than a decade earlier the Roman tribune for Jerusalem had been summoned to Rome, tried, and then executed back in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.132, 136).

²⁸⁰⁷ Justin, *Epit.* 2.11.12; 6.7.2–3; 13.8.5–6; Arrian, *Alex.* 3.10.1–3.

Although word will quickly circulate in Jerusalem that a large force has left, its purpose would remain unknown and it is too late to set ambushes.

The force's size in 23:23 is debated. Are the *two hundred spearmen* identical to or additional to the *two hundred soldiers*? Although centurions normally commanded no more than 80 soldiers each, *two* (23:23) would nevertheless be sufficient to lead 200 soldiers if necessary. Most scholars, however, accept a total of 470 soldiers here.

Normal cohorts traditionally comprised about 480–500 soldiers; partly mounted cohorts added 120 horsemen.²⁸⁰⁸ Units of 800–1,000 became standard soon afterward²⁸⁰⁹ and may have already been in effect.²⁸¹⁰ Ultimately, the governor could leave in Jerusalem whatever size cohort he pleased (Josephus, *War* 2.331), and may have left extra troops there for the festival or because of instability.²⁸¹¹

Whatever the case, in Acts 23:23 Lysias dispatches a sizeable proportion of his cohort. Considering the strength of the Antonia Fortress and roadside dangers in precisely this period, this may not be too surprising (cf. Luke 14:31). "Robbers" were regularly increasing in the countryside, so that Felix was killing them daily (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.160–61); many apparently had villagers' support (*War* 2.229).²⁸¹² Such bandits would often strike at night, as thieves and robbers always had.²⁸¹³ They also predominated in the hill country, where most of this nocturnal expedition would transpire.²⁸¹⁴ Attacks on roads in this period, including this one, embarrassed governors and even crushed a Roman army.²⁸¹⁵ In the limited visibility of night, the speed advantage otherwise afforded by cavalry alone would be restricted, and the possible danger of roadblocks made additional infantry helpful until daylight beyond the hill country (23:31–32). More sizeable forces often deterred attackers; to prevent intervention, Josephus

²⁸⁰⁸ *OCD*³ 225; J. B. Campbell, "Auxilia," 420; cf. Southern, *Army*, 333.

²⁸⁰⁹ *OCD*³ 225.

²⁸¹⁰ *OCD*³ 356.

²⁸¹¹ Governors increased the garrison especially during festivals, when excessively dense crowds were most likely to erupt into violence (Josephus, *War* 5.244; *Ant.* 20.106–7).

²⁸¹² Cf. *Ant.* 20.113–14, 121, 124, 172; for "social bandits," see further R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston, 1985), 48–50, 63–85, 250–51; *OCD*³ 260–61; but cf. L. Blumell, "Social Banditry? Galilean Banditry from Herod the Great to the Outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 27 (2008): 35–53.

²⁸¹³ E.g., Homer, *Il.* 3.10–11; Catullus 62.34–35; Phaedrus 1.23.3–4; Job 24:14; Jer 49:9; Obad 5; Matt 24:43; *Sib. Or.* 3.238, 380; Luke 12:39.

²⁸¹⁴ See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.121; *War.* 2.511; earlier, cf. *Ant.* 14.422; 15.120.

²⁸¹⁵ Josephus, *War* 2.228, 547–53; *Ant.* 20.113; Hengel, "Geography," 65–66.

sent four troublemakers back to Jerusalem with an escort of 500 armed guards (*Life* 332), roughly the number probably cited here.

Caesarea (23:23) hosted both the governor and most of Judea's auxiliary cohorts (see comment on 10:1). The governor is *Felix* (23:26),²⁸¹⁶ whom all ancient sources depict negatively. Although a freedman rather than (like normal governors) an equestrian, he was brother of Pallas, one of Claudius's two most favored freedman.²⁸¹⁷ The likeliest dates for Felix's tenure are c. 53–59, with Paul's custody from 57–59.

Lysias must word his letter (23:25) carefully; it will become part of Paul's official case file, available to both sides in the case. An officer transferring a prisoner to a superior would have to send such a letter (cf. 25:26–27), and its nine legal terms confirm its purpose as an official referral.²⁸¹⁸ Historians could compose letters where they lacked them, but they often drew on genuine documents where available,²⁸¹⁹ simply adapting them to fit contexts and the author's preferred style.²⁸²⁰ It is inconceivable that Paul would have been transferred without such a letter, and once it became part of his file it would be available to him and his allies.²⁸²¹ Such a letter in his case file also protects Paul from Felix surrendering him for political expediency (cf. 24:27).

The name *Claudius Lysias* (23:26) fits a Greek (cf. 21:37) who acquired citizenship under Claudius (see comment on 22:28), some years earlier. Lysias's version of events (23:27) honors himself more than does that of the reliable narrator (21:31–33).²⁸²² It is also not completely plausible: how

²⁸¹⁶ Named either M. Antonius Felix (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9; C. J. Hemer, "The Name of Felix Again," *JSNT* 31 [1987]: 45–49 [47–48]) or, somewhat likelier, Tiberius Claudius Felix (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.137; *CIL* 6.8143; F. F. Bruce, "The Full Name of the Procurator Felix," *JSNT* 1 [1978]: 33–36; N. Kokkinos, "A Fresh Look at the Gentilicium of Felix, Procurator of Judaea," *Latomus* 49 [1, 1990]: 126–41).

²⁸¹⁷ Josephus, *War* 2.247; *Ant.* 20.137; Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.54. For Pallas, see, e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 7.29.2–4; 8.6.1–4; Suetonius, *Claud.* 28.

²⁸¹⁸ Winter, "Official Proceedings," 309.

²⁸¹⁹ E.g., Polybius 3.33.17–18; 21.42.1–27; cf. *NewDocs* 7, §1, pp. 24–25; V. Parker, "The Letters in II Maccabees: Reflexions on the Book's Composition," *ZAW* 119 (3, 2007): 386–402.

²⁸²⁰ Thus here Lysias states Paul's innocence in a manner that fits Luke's pattern of Roman declarations of innocence for Paul and Jesus; cf. H.-J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 434 (cf. 420); J. R. Howell, "Embedded Letters and Rhetorical αὔξησις," pages 154–80 in *Contemporary Studies in Acts* (ed. T. E. Phillips; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 162–64; earlier Chrysostom, *Catena on Acts* 23.28–30.

²⁸²¹ Winter, "Official Proceedings," 309. Paul would have also heard the letter read (23:34), hence be able to summarize its content.

²⁸²² Lysias's ambition surfaces elsewhere (22:28); he is a round character (Tannehill, *Acts*, 295).

would Lysias discover Paul's Roman citizenship before reaching him, in the midst of a riot?²⁸²³ By conflating the rescue in 23:10 with his previous (unintentional) one (21:32–35), Lysias can justify his later claim to Felix to have rescued Paul on the basis of his Roman citizenship (23:27). Lysias trusts Paul not to contradict Lysias's revised version of events; social codes demanded gratitude for one's benefactor.²⁸²⁴ Once Lysias has rescued Paul (now for the third time, and the second deliberate time), he need not worry that Paul, whom he recognizes as an honorable person, will embarrass him.

Because Paul loudly *called out* in 23:6, presumably in Greek, Lysias's understanding of the Sanhedrin hearing involves Judean religion, not an offense for which a Roman citizen could be executed (23:29). Lysias diplomatically omits any malfeasance within the Council (23:9–10, 15), which would create political tension that would pit Lysias and his career against local officials known for conflict with Rome's representatives.²⁸²⁵

23:31–35: MILITARY ESCORT

Soldiers could march all night in emergencies.²⁸²⁶ Luke knows that travel between Jerusalem and Caesarea took time (21:15–17), yet depicts the soldiers, who leave at nine p.m. (23:23), reaching Antipatris overnight (23:31). Although most of the journey was overnight, it presumably carried into daylight before completed. If Antipatris was 35–45 miles beyond Jerusalem (the precise site is debated),²⁸²⁷ soldiers marching at 4 miles per hour would reach it by nine a.m.; the march was mostly downhill.

Soldiers usually marched only 18–20 miles (30–36 km) per day, but undertook 30 miles (50 km) for forced marches.²⁸²⁸ Marches were often

²⁸²³ Its implausibility could be one reason that Lysias's testimony (Acts 24:22) does not settle the case and that Jerusalem's elite delegation against Paul does not expect it to do so.

²⁸²⁴ For reciprocity expectations, see, e.g., Cicero, *Fam.* 13.22.2; 13.25.1; 13.26.4; Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 19.17–19; Statius, *Silvae* 4.9; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.2.6; 4.13.10; 6.6.3; Plutarch, *Cim.* 2.1–2; *OCD*³ 637, 1295; deSilva, *Honor*, 109; J. R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context* (WUNT 2.172; Tübingen: Mohr, 2003), 1, 15, 40–43, 50–53, 196, 348, especially here 40–43.

²⁸²⁵ Under the previous governor, this included the execution of the tribune of Jerusalem's cohort, Lysias's position (Josephus, *War* 2.246).

²⁸²⁶ Thucydides 4.68.5; Caesar, *Gallie War* 2.7; Josephus, *Life* 90, 115, 395.

²⁸²⁷ Compare, e.g., Rapske, "Travel," 13–14, with Hengel, "Geography of Palestine," 64. The road, however, is certain (see S. Dar and S. Applebaum, "The Roman Road from Antipatris to Caesarea," *PEQ* 105 [1973]: 91–99), as is Antipatris's existence (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.390; 16.143; *War* 1.99, 417; 2.513–15, 554; 4.443).

²⁸²⁸ Adkins and Adkins, *Life*, 90.

4 miles (6 km) per hour because of heavy baggage, but soldiers traveled with only bare essentials for urgent missions.²⁸²⁹ Thrice-monthly exercises included marching in full pack 20 miles per day at the rate of 4 and occasionally 5 Roman miles per hour.²⁸³⁰ Those inured to such exercise on a regular basis could push harder in a genuinely dangerous situation.²⁸³¹

Whereas infantry helped in the Judean hills, they would only slow the cavalry down in the open country after Antipatris (23:31–32). The coastal plain had a lower proportion of Jewish inhabitants. The foot soldiers' return journey uphill no doubt proceeded at slower pace and during daylight (23:32).²⁸³²

Paul would hear *the letter* read (23:34), since most reading was done aloud (as in 8:30). As Pilate asks about Jesus's Galilean provenance and then refers him to Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6–7), Felix asks Paul's province (Acts 23:34), probably as a way of evading this politically charged case (cf. 23:29–30). A governor could extradite the accused to their home provinces if he did not wish to try the case.²⁸³³ Unfortunately for Felix, Paul's territory of Cilicia Pedias (eastern Cilicia) was, like Judea, under the Roman legate of Syria-Cilicia at this time (cf. Gal 1:21). (When Luke was writing, after 72, Cilicia was a separate province again.) Felix could not transfer the case to his superior without good reason for not handling it himself.²⁸³⁴

The cavalry would have reached Caesarea after a governor's normal public work hours,²⁸³⁵ and Felix postpones further inquiry for the moment (23:35). The governor must await Paul's accusers (23:35), mentioned in Lysias's letter (23:30); Roman law depended on accusations.²⁸³⁶

²⁸²⁹ See Southern, *Army*, 223–24. A forced march to Antipatris requires no baggage for a camp.

²⁸³⁰ Jones, "Army," 206; cf. Suetonius, *Jul.* 65.

²⁸³¹ E.g., Justin, *Epit.* 11.8.2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.16; much faster for mounts, as in Suetonius, *Jul.* 57; Rapske, "Travel," 9; *OCD*³ 1234, 1467. Witherington, *Acts*, 697, cites Caesar, *Gallic Wars* 7.40–41; Plutarch, *M. Ant.* 47.2; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.292–93; earlier, *OCD*³ 881, notes Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.2.6.

²⁸³² An army not engaging in imminent battle might rest for a few days after a forced march (Velleius Paterculus 2.113.2). Luke's usual use of *next day* (23:32) might suggest immediate return to Jerusalem (reinforcing again the garrison), but his real interest in any case lies with the cavalry carrying his source.

²⁸³³ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 31; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.10.

²⁸³⁴ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 172.

²⁸³⁵ Which ended at noon; cf., e.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.66.147; Plutarch, *Rom. Q.* 84, *Mor.* 284D.

²⁸³⁶ Cf. Cicero, *Verr.* 2.2.38.94; W. J. O'Neal, "Delation in the Early Empire," *Classical Bulletin* 55 (2, 1978): 24–28.

Trusting his subordinate's letter, however, he has Paul kept in *Herod's headquarters*, literally, his *praetorium*. The term designates a provincial governor's headquarters,²⁸³⁷ and its association with Herod means that Romans used it just as they used Herod's palace in Jerusalem (Philo, *Embassy* 299; Josephus, *War* 2.301, 328). This high-status prisoner receives better "custodial arrangements" than most of the many prisoners in Caesarea.²⁸³⁸ Paul is now housed in the governor's many-roomed palace near the sea (explaining Felix's easy access to him in 24:24–26).²⁸³⁹

24:1–9: CHARGES AGAINST PAUL

Acts 24:1–26:32 addresses Paul's defense before authorities. Luke's audience may be embarrassed not only by Jesus's crucifixion but now perhaps even more by the captivity and ultimate execution of the best-known apostle to the gentiles. Luke's answer to such concerns is clear and to the point, and sometimes employs the standard judicial defense technique of returning charges against accusers.

In these chapters Paul's just case is subverted by political interests and a corrupt governor. The heart of the Jerusalem elite's case is the charge that Paul subverts the Roman order (ironic in view of 23:2–15, esp. 23:12–15), whereas Paul reduces the opposition's motives (as in 22:30–23:10) to theological disagreement. Far from being subversive, Paul proves morally superior to the judge who fails to release him (24:24–27).

The heart of the charges against Paul is sedition, a capital offense, and profanation of the temple (which Jerusalemites themselves were normally permitted to execute; cf. 24:6). That Luke takes these charges seriously is clear from his elaborate narrative refutation of them earlier in Acts: the many riots associated with Paul are caused not by Paul but by his enemies, reacting against his controversial message. Luke also gives an alternative reading (or, counting Lysias's version, two alternative readings) of Paul's seizure in the temple.

²⁸³⁷ See *OCD*³ 1241.

²⁸³⁸ Rapske, *Custody*, 156; Rapske, "Prison," 827. Herod's own son Antipater had been guarded here (Josephus, *War* 1.663; *Ant.* 17.184–87).

²⁸³⁹ On the site's elegance, see, e.g., B. Burrell, K. Gleason, and E. Netzer, "Uncovering Herod's Seaside Palace," *BAR* 19 (3, 1993): 50–57, 76; K. L. Gleason et al., "The Promontory Palace at Caesarea Maritima: Preliminary Evidence for Herod's *Praetorium*," *JRA* 11 (1998): 23–52. Cf. Josephus, *War* 1.408; *Ant.* 15.331.

Many scholars complain here about lack of support from the Jerusalem church, but, as too often in NT scholarship, they build arguments from silence. Paul's last reported meeting with the elders was cordial (21:17–26), they held no influence with the governor, and Luke simply leaves unspecified the identity of Paul's supporters in 24:23 (who may have included, besides Paul's companions, Caesarean believers as in 21:8–9). Luke does not even specify his own presence, despite its clear implication (21:18; 27:1).

The dominant language in Caesarea was Greek,²⁸⁴⁰ and that would be the hearing's language. Often cases could languish on the docket (cf. 24:21, 27), but the status of the litigants moves this one to the top as soon as the accusers arrive (23:35; 24:1). In the five intervening days (24:1), Paul's friends probably have contacted witnesses, especially those in Caesarea who can confirm how recently Paul had left for Jerusalem (24:11).

As was customary, in 24:1 the prosecutor reports the case before the governor (24:1), before the accused is summoned to trial (24:2a).²⁸⁴¹ The relative status of the accusers and defendants constituted a major factor in trials in this period.²⁸⁴² Paul's accusers are of higher local status, and some (such as Tertullus) may have shared his Roman citizenship.²⁸⁴³ Yet their charge that Paul is a ringleader among Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) probably also inadvertently suggests Paul's own significant constituency (21:20; 24:22), making Felix more cautious. Given the politics of the situation, however, Felix would have presumably handed Paul over had their case been even slightly compelling.

Ananias in particular would carry much weight, probably more than many of Luke's first real audience knew. Felix became governor because his predecessor lost a case against this Ananias (Josephus, *War* 2.243–47). Some two to four years after the events depicted here, another high priest executed Jesus's brother James (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200); the perceived leader of the Jesus movement's Diaspora mission might generate even greater enmity.

The prosecution normally spoke first.²⁸⁴⁴ Tertullus's speech (24:2–8) abounds in flowery rhetoric,²⁸⁴⁵ as one would expect from an elite rhetor.

²⁸⁴⁰ B. Isaac, "Latin and Greek in the Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima," *JRA* 16 (2003): 665–68.

²⁸⁴¹ Witherington, *Acts*, 703, following T. Mommsen, "Die Rechtsverhältnisse des Apostels Paulus," *ZNW* 2 (1901): 81–96.

²⁸⁴² Cicero, *Verr.* 2.2.38.94; Rapske, "Prison," 827; P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 279–80.

²⁸⁴³ Some Jerusalemites were even equestrians (Josephus, *War* 2.308).

²⁸⁴⁴ E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 19.2, §152; Terence, *Eunuch* 10–13; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.13.

²⁸⁴⁵ Such as alliteration in 24:3: *pantê . . . pantachou . . . pasês*; cf. Eph 1:23; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.5.22.

That Luke's précis of the speech lacks formal proofs relevant to the "facts" of the *narratio* fits summaries of forensic petitions attested in ancient papyri,²⁸⁴⁶ though may also reinforce Paul's claim that his opponents lack proof (24:13; 25:7).

Tertullus's speech opens with a standard *captatio benevolentiae*, an exordium meant to secure the magistrate's favor by flattery (24:2).²⁸⁴⁷ Speakers commonly praised judges or jurors for their attention to justice²⁸⁴⁸ or integrity.²⁸⁴⁹ The issues praised here (*peace* and stability, *reforms*, and *foresight*) were common in praising leaders.²⁸⁵⁰ Felix's suppression of many brigands (cf. 21:38)²⁸⁵¹ did reveal his concern to maintain order, the point at issue here (24:5–6).²⁸⁵²

Luke, by contrast, reveals Felix's corruption (24:26–27). Indeed, Felix's misadministration may have helped lead to the Judean revolt,²⁸⁵³ which, in contrast to Paul's preaching of concern for gentiles (22:21; cf. Luke 6:35), would lead to Jerusalem's destruction (Luke 21:20–24).

Tertullus promises brevity (24:4), which rhetoric often valued;²⁸⁵⁴ speakers often noted that they could say more about the matter at hand but had to move on for the sake of time.²⁸⁵⁵ Tertullus begs Felix to continue listening, as orators often did.²⁸⁵⁶ In 24:5, Tertullus, ironically echoing an earlier imperial complaint about the "pestilence" of Jewish unrest,²⁸⁵⁷ denounces Paul, an object of such unrest (23:14–15), as *a pestilent fellow*!²⁸⁵⁸ Being a "pest" encouraging unrest may have been the most damaging charge to level against a Jew in the decades between Claudius's decree

²⁸⁴⁶ Winter, "Official Proceedings," 320–21.

²⁸⁴⁷ Cf. *Sipre Deut.* 343.1.2. Winter, "Official Proceedings," 315, compares those in legal petitions (e.g., *P. Fouad.* 26).

²⁸⁴⁸ Aeschines, *Tim.* 178; *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442a.14–16; *P. Ryl.* 114.3–5; Apuleius, *Apol.* 3.

²⁸⁴⁹ Cicero, *Rosc. com.* 3.7; *Quinct.* 2.10.

²⁸⁵⁰ Peace in Cicero, *Quint. Fratr.* 1.1.8.25; *Res Gestae* heading; 3.1; 25.1; 26.2–3; 27.2; Silius Italicus 14.686; Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.5; cf. Luke 1:79; 2:14. For foresight, see 2 Macc 14:9; in forensic papyri, *P. Fouad.* 26; *P. Ryl.* 114.5 in Winter, "Captatio Benevolentiae," 517.

²⁸⁵¹ Josephus, *War* 2.253, 260, 263; *Ant.* 20.161.

²⁸⁵² One should tactfully praise the judge especially in ways relevant to the case at hand (Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.16).

²⁸⁵³ See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.162–82 (esp. 162–67).

²⁸⁵⁴ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 18, 20, 24; *Lysias* 5; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.139; Tacitus, *Dial.* 25; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.4.569.

²⁸⁵⁵ Demosthenes, *Cor.* 266; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.2.1.1–2; 2.4.26.57.

²⁸⁵⁶ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 24; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.47.105; *Quinct.* 6.22.

²⁸⁵⁷ *P. Lond.* 1912.98–100; *CPJ* 2:36–55, §153.

²⁸⁵⁸ An irony also noted in Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 50.

and Jerusalem's revolt.²⁸⁵⁹ *Throughout the world* suits typical polemical hyperbole.²⁸⁶⁰

Accusers commonly painted opponents' wickedness as broadly as possible, claiming to merely sample their crimes.²⁸⁶¹ Judges and juries decided cases partly on the basis of *êthos*, i.e., character,²⁸⁶² so denouncing opponents' character was standard forensic rhetoric.²⁸⁶³ Slanders were not limited to charges but could be invented freely.²⁸⁶⁴ Negative character made charges believable,²⁸⁶⁵ whereas positive character made them difficult to accept.²⁸⁶⁶

Being *an agitator* (24:5; cf. the same term in 19:40; Luke 23:19, 25), a disturber of the sort of peace Felix was supposed to establish (Acts 24:2), was a dangerous charge.²⁸⁶⁷ Adversaries are charging Paul with *seditio* (as in 17:6–7), the charge on which Jesus was executed (Luke 23:2, 5). Treason was the only offense for which inciting others was itself criminally liable,²⁸⁶⁸ when it proved hard to demonstrate, the next best charge was the overlapping offense of *seditio*.²⁸⁶⁹ Felix, however, will recognize that this is a new charge (23:28–29) – and adding charges violated legal conventions!²⁸⁷⁰

A Closer Look: Paul and Riots

Charges were most persuasive against those convicted or at least charged before.²⁸⁷¹ The pattern of riots surrounding Paul (24:5; cf. 16:20–21; 17:5–7, 13; 19:29, 40; 21:30) works against him;²⁸⁷² Tertullus probably has at least the

²⁸⁵⁹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 51–53; Rapske, *Custody*, 161.

²⁸⁶⁰ Cicero, *Sest.* 52.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.1, 14; Acts 17:6.

²⁸⁶¹ Lysias, *Or.* 12.1, §120; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.2.48.118; 2.4.46.102; 2.4.47.105.

²⁸⁶² Isaeus, *Nicost.* 27; *Rhet. Her.* 4.50.63; Apuleius, *Apol.* 90.

²⁸⁶³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Isaeus* 3, 9; Cicero, *Scaur.* 13.29; Apuleius, *Apol.* 1, 25; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.1.99; 1.2.102–3. Cf. K. R. Jones, "The Figure of Apion in Josephus' *Contra Apionem*," *JSJ* 36 (3, 2005): 278–315.

²⁸⁶⁴ Openly admitted in Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 3.3; parody in Lucian, *Z. Rants* 52; *Tim.* 52–53; *Peregr.* 31.

²⁸⁶⁵ E.g., Quintilian, *Decl.* 313.15; 322.3; 331 intro; 331.21–22.

²⁸⁶⁶ E.g., Quintilian, *Decl.* 314.2; 322.3; 351.8; 377.2–3.

²⁸⁶⁷ Neyrey, "Forensic Defense Speech," 215–26; Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 76.

²⁸⁶⁸ Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 19.

²⁸⁶⁹ Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 78–80.

²⁸⁷⁰ E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 7.2, §108; Cicero, *Att.* 2.24; Apuleius, *Apol.* 2; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.5.148.

²⁸⁷¹ Plato, *Apol.* 17CD; Isaeus, *Aristarch.* 1; Lysias, *Or.* 5.2–3, §§102–3; Cicero, *Sest.* 30.64; Apuleius, *Apol.* 3; see comment on 23:1.

²⁸⁷² With R. J. Cassidy, "The Non-Roman Opponents of Paul," pages 150–62 in Richard, *New Views*; Wallace and Williams, *Acts*, 18–20. Never having been convicted reduces the danger of charges (Fronto, *Ad Am.* 2.7.5).

report of the Ephesus riot from the perspective of Paul's original Asian Jewish accusers (21:27–29).²⁸⁷³

Historically, Paul experienced opposition from both Jews and gentiles (2 Cor 11:24, 26), but Luke has good reason to highlight Jewish instances. First-century Jewish responses to riots were often to show, when possible, that their enemies caused the riots, and therefore that Rome should reaffirm Jewish rights.²⁸⁷⁴ If Luke can argue that Paul's Jewish opponents rather than Paul himself incited many of these riots, he can argue that Christians should not be punished as authors of unrest.²⁸⁷⁵ In a majority of incidents recounted, Luke contends, Paul's opposition was Jewish (9:23, 29; 13:50; 14:5, 19; 17:5, 13; 21:28; cf. 18:12; contrast 16:20–23; 19:33–34). ****

Tertullus further denounces Paul as *a ringleader of the sect*²⁸⁷⁶ of the *Nazarenes* (24:5). *Nazarenes* may be a derisive title like "Christians" (11:26; 26:28);²⁸⁷⁷ in 24:14, Paul reframes *sect* as *the* [true] *Way* in 24:14.²⁸⁷⁸ Ringleaders bore special responsibility for crimes committed by their movements.²⁸⁷⁹ Against Tertullus's intention, the size of the Nazarene movement (21:20; 24:5) may provide Felix political considerations that make this "ringleader's" execution less expedient than that of Jesus in Luke 23:23–24.

The one charge against Paul that is very specific is that he *tried to profane the temple* (24:6); "trying," however, concedes by this point that he did not succeed.²⁸⁸⁰ Tertullus's implication that Judean authorities *seized* Paul in some coordinated way sounds much more orderly than the actual attempted lynching that Luke recounts in 21:30–31.²⁸⁸¹ Even

²⁸⁷³ Not anticipating finding Paul in Jerusalem, however, they would not have prepared formal research. They probably did not offer affidavits, which could invite them to be arraigned (Apuleius, *Apol.* 46).

²⁸⁷⁴ See Stoops, "Riot," 78–80.

²⁸⁷⁵ Cf. Stoops, "Riot," 81.

²⁸⁷⁶ Many used "sect" nonjudgmentally for various schools of thought (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.19.20), including among Judeans (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 13.171, 288, 293; 20.199; Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5).

²⁸⁷⁷ Ultimately adopted by Judean believers, however; see R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (StPB 37; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 16, 104–5; Flusser, *Judaism and Origins*, 638.

²⁸⁷⁸ Forensic oratory often focused on definition and counterdefinition (see Hermogenes, *Issues* 59.17–60.8).

²⁸⁷⁹ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 3.40.3; 5.43.2; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:465.

²⁸⁸⁰ The relevant of a defendant's mere intention was argued both ways, as needed, e.g., Quintilian, *Decl.* 302.3; 314.6; Hermogenes, *Issues* 61.16–18; Libanius, *Topics* 2.1.

²⁸⁸¹ Bruce, *Acts*¹, 422. Luke describes the lynching despite more elegant depictions by speakers in 21:11 and 23:27. Acts 24:6b–8a in older versions is textually suspect, though it reflects a plausible inference in early reception history: whereas Lysias claimed to have

Romans could be executed (perhaps even directly, Josephus, *War* 6.126) for violating the temple; but Paul is a *Jew* and no gentile has been apprehended.²⁸⁸² Still, Tertullus knows that protests can secure the execution of Rome's agents who disturb the peace by desecrating holy things (*Ant.* 20.115–17); to maintain order, even tribunes were expendable (*Ant.* 20.136).

It was conventional forensic rhetoric to assert that one spoke the truth, that one's enemy lied²⁸⁸³ (itself an actionable offense),²⁸⁸⁴ and to imply confidence that of course the very prudent judges or jury recognize this (24:8–9).²⁸⁸⁵ Rhetorically, the request for an impartial investigation (24:8) implies the self-evident truth of the speaker's claim.²⁸⁸⁶ That "the Judeans" (i.e., the high priest and elders of 24:1) *joined in the charge* recalls insistent cries for Jesus's condemnation in Luke's passion narrative (Luke 23:5, 10, 18, 21, 23).

24:10–21: IMPRESSIVE DEFENSE

Although rhetorical students invented mock defense speeches and historians tried to approximate what they believed was most likely spoken on an occasion, this speech undoubtedly recalls much of Paul's actual argument on the occasion. Luke was probably again with Paul during this period, hearings were typically open to the public (though in ch. 26 presumably precluded by the status of guests), and court summaries of speeches were available to both sides in a case.²⁸⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Acts approximates so closely the procedure of Roman law that many Roman historians have

"rescued" Paul from Judean violence (23:27), his accusers now must challenge Lysias's credibility, attributing the real violence to Lysias. His implausible claim to have preascertained Paul's citizenship (23:27) leaves his account vulnerable.

²⁸⁸² Trophimus (21:29) probably had witnesses concerning his whereabouts at the alleged time of desecration, and by now he would have left Jerusalem.

²⁸⁸³ E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 3.39, §99; 4.13, §101; Isaeus, *Astyph.* 19; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 33; Cicero, *Quinct.* 6.22; *Rosc. com.* 16.46; *Mur.* 6.13; Apuleius, *Apol.* 3, 52, 69, 74, 83, 89; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.85, 90, 98, 111, 115, 121, 122.

²⁸⁸⁴ Apuleius, *Apol.* 60; 89; A. Völkl, "Perjury," *BNP* 10:805.

²⁸⁸⁵ E.g., Isaeus, *Cleon.* 41; *Nicost.* 31; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 9.29.3; Cicero, *Mil.* 11.30; 38.105.

²⁸⁸⁶ E.g., Aeschines, *Tim.* 107: "I leave it to you to investigate this matter" (LCL p. 87).

²⁸⁸⁷ Winter, "Captatio Benevolentiae," 505–6, 526–28; Winter, "Official Proceedings," 307 n. 7. For court transcripts (i.e., summary minutes), see, e.g., *P.Oxy.* 37; 237, col. 7.19–29. Speakers often retained their own notes, which they sometimes published after improving them (e.g., Plutarch, *Cic.* 7.4).

treated it as the clearest illustration of how governors in the provinces conducted such trials.²⁸⁸⁸

Paul responds to Tertullus's argument skillfully. His opponents cannot prove their case or even dignify its plausibility; the true vendetta against him is theological. Empowered by the promised Spirit, Paul speaks for himself instead of depending on a hired orator like Tertullus (Luke 12:11–12; 21:13–15). In contrast to Tertullus's proem in 24:2–3 followed by assertions in 24:5–6, Paul's proem (24:10) consumes a much briefer proportion of his reported speech, which focuses on evidence, procedure, and content (24:11–21).

The speech structure resembles that of typical defense speeches.²⁸⁸⁹ Various rhetorical techniques include:²⁸⁹⁰

- Paul conceding and confessing what is not a crime (24:14).
- *Êthos* (character): Paul's virtue contradicts the charges (24:17).
- Possibly reversing the charges by innuendo (24:18).
- Underlining the relevant legal observation that the proper plaintiffs have not shown up (24:19; this should close the case).
- Finally, pointing out that the real issue is purely theological (24:20–21; as in 24:14–15), hence not actionable.

Despite the suspense generated by Tertullus's rhetorical skill and the status of Paul's opponents, Paul has the legal advantage. First, when original accusers are not present (24:19), a case should be thrown out. Second, accusers in this sort of trial bear the burden of proof,²⁸⁹¹ and, unlike Paul, these accusers offer none (24:13; cf. 25:7). Third, their motives are suspect: the only charge addressed in the Council's preliminary hearing (which Lysias's own letter attests in 23:28–29) is a doctrinal difference within Judaism itself (24:20–21) – no offense actionable in a Roman court. Indeed, *most* of Paul's defense draws attention to Jewish questions that no Roman governor would admit as actionable in a Roman court (24:14–21).

²⁸⁸⁸ See esp. Sherwin-White, *Society*, 48–70; idem, "The Trial of Christ," pages 97–116 in *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 101.

²⁸⁸⁹ Winter, "Official Proceedings," 323 (noting Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.9.1; *P.Ryl.* 114).

²⁸⁹⁰ See Keener, "Rhetorical Techniques." Luke sees no conflict between depending on the Spirit (Luke 12:11–12; 21:15) and using rhetorical and legal argumentation (see Kurz, *Acts*, 361–62).

²⁸⁹¹ Isaeus, *Nicost.* 9; Cicero, *Rosc. Amer.* 23.64–65. For analysis of Paul's rhetorical argument, see Keener, "Rhetorical Techniques," 234–51.

Expressing confidence in judges or jurors was conventional.²⁸⁹² Felix had governed for probably more than five years (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.137) and thus had sufficient experience with Judea (24:10; cf. 24:22, 24)²⁸⁹³ to understand the nature of the case. He would understand the relevance of Paul's *twelve days* in 24:11. These days might start in Caesarea and end with his capture (21:15–18, 27); nor (obviously) has he clearly stirred trouble during the past five days (in custody, 24:1). Witnesses, including in Caesarea itself (e.g., 21:8–9, 16) can attest the chronology, which permits little time to stir trouble²⁸⁹⁴ and suggests that he came for the festival (20:16). *Êthos* (character) also plays a role: one who came to worship (24:11) and bring alms (24:17) would not be a rabble-rouser²⁸⁹⁵ or temple desecrator.²⁸⁹⁶

Luke summarizes Paul's *refutatio* (refutation) or *propositio* (thesis statement) in 24:13.²⁸⁹⁷ Defendants sometimes rebutted charges in sequence;²⁸⁹⁸ Paul refutes the sedition charge in 24:12, possibly complaints about his Nazarene faith in 24:14–16, and the temple desecration charge in 24:17–19. Paul had not even engaged in normal scribal debates in Jerusalem on this occasion (24:12).²⁸⁹⁹

Orators often demanded that their opponents prove their case, or asserted their lack of proof (24:13).²⁹⁰⁰ Paul's accusers cannot produce his alleged gentile accomplice or witnesses of Paul's alleged desecration. In 24:14–18, Paul reinforces his *êthos* as a pious worshiper of Israel's God. In 24:14, Paul confesses his real "crime," foreshadowing his conclusion that the real case against him is purely theological (24:20–21). Confessing an

²⁸⁹² E.g., Isocrates, *Antidosis* 323, *Or.* 15; *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442a.14–16; Cicero, *Quinct.* 2.1, 10; 9.34; *Verr.* 2.1.7.18.

²⁸⁹³ And prior Samaritan experience (Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.54).

²⁸⁹⁴ Especially given his absence of years (24:17). Greeks valued arguments from probability; see Demosthenes, *Fals. leg.* 120; *Pant.* 23; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.15.17, 1376a; *Rhet. Alex.* 7, 1428a.19–23; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 11.34.1–6. Discrepancies in an opposing argument helped undermine the opponent's case; see *Rhet. Alex.* 5, 1427b.12–30; 9, 1430a.14–21; 10, 1430a.26–27; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 15; Cicero, *Vat.* 1.3; *Quinct.* 24.76.

²⁸⁹⁵ For such probability arguments based on character, cf., e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 7, 1428b.34–36; 36, 1442a.29–32; 36, 1443b.34–38; Cicero, *Rosc. com.* 7.21; *Sull.* 24.68; *Cael.* 29.69; *Verr.* 2.1.6.17; Valerius Maximus 8.5.6; Hermogenes, *Issues* 33.

²⁸⁹⁶ On temple desecration, see comment on 19:37.

²⁸⁹⁷ Defendants often summarized, then refuted, accusations; see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 17, 26.

²⁸⁹⁸ Apuleius, *Apol.* 61.

²⁸⁹⁹ Unlike earlier there and elsewhere (9:29; 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8–9).

²⁹⁰⁰ Isaeus, *Cleon.* 49; *Lysias*, *Or.* 27.12–13, §178–79; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lit. Comp.* 3; Cicero, *Mur.* 6.13; *Flacc.* 15.34; *Rosc. Amer.* 29.79; Pliny, *Ep.* 5.20.4–5; Apuleius, *Apol.* 2, 25, 54; Hermogenes, *Issues* 45.1–2; Josephus, *Ant.* 17.131; *War* 1.638.

“offense” that was inoffensive to the judges was a common rhetorical strategy.²⁹⁰¹ Speakers should admit charges not harmful to their case (Aulus Gellius 12.12.1).²⁹⁰²

Paul’s pious beliefs include the future resurrection (24:15); although this is the reason Paul is accused (24:21), it was the shared belief of most Judeans. If Paul’s present accusers did not really *accept* it (see 23:8; cf. 4:2; 5:17), disavowing that acceptance here would paint them as more sectarian than Paul. On this issue, they rather than Paul fell among the minority of Judeans²⁹⁰³ – as Felix will know (24:10, 22, 24). Paul’s resurrection hope (24:15) causes him to live with a clear conscience (*therefore*, 24:16); believers in a future accounting were normally considered more morally inclined.²⁹⁰⁴

Far from being a troublemaker, Paul was a *benefactor* (cf. 4:9)!²⁹⁰⁵ *Alms to my nation* (24:17) echoes Jewish piety (cf. Tob 1:3, 16), and refers historically to the collection. Paul emphasized the collection in the period depicted (Rom 15:25–27; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8–9), but it was apparently irrelevant in the time Luke writes.²⁹⁰⁶ (Paul neglects it even in his own later letters.)²⁹⁰⁷ Paul did the *opposite* of profaning the temple (24:6); he came to bring sacrifices (24:17) and underwent *purification* (24:18; 21:24, 26) there! By contrast, his accusers confessed to seizing him in a temple (24:6), though holy sites were supposed to offer nearly inviolable refuge!²⁹⁰⁸

²⁹⁰¹ E.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 1.7.16–17; Josephus, *Life* 142–43; Quintilian, *Decl.* 300.9; 301.3, 14; Apuleius, *Apol.* 55; challenged in Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.11–14.

²⁹⁰² See also Rowe, “Style,” 146–47; R. D. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (rev. ed.; CBET 18; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 224.

²⁹⁰³ See Dan 12:2; 1 *En.* 51:1–2; 61:5; 4 *Macc* 9:9; 12:12; 4 *Ezra* 7:37–38; 2 *Bar.* 50:2–51:5; 51:10–12; *m. Sanh.* 10:1; *t. Sanh.* 13:5. Some applied it only to the righteous (2 *Macc* 7:10–11, 14; 14:46; 1 *En.* 22:13; 46:6; *Ps. Sol.* 3:11–12), or the wicked would be raised and then destroyed (4 *Ezra* 7:61).

²⁹⁰⁴ See, e.g., Plutarch, *Pleas. L.* 23, *Mor.* 1103D; *Wisd* 2:1–9.

²⁹⁰⁵ Rhetoric valued this argument; cf. Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.11.32; Cicero, *Sest.* 69.145–46; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 11.7.41; Hermogenes, *Issues* 73.6–7; 2 *Cor* 12:13; *Gal* 4:16; comment on Acts 4:9.

²⁹⁰⁶ Possibly its grand objective (cf. perhaps Isa 60:5–7; 61:6; Rom 11:25–26) failed (15:31), or Romans could have deemed it subversive (K. F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Biblical Theology* [SBT 48; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1966], 148–51; cf. Cicero, *Flacc.* 28.66–67); writers passed over quickly what was unpleasant or unhelpful (Theon, *Progymn.* 5.52–56). It is unlikely that the collection was *rejected*, as some suggest; see comment on 21:17.

²⁹⁰⁷ F. J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 183.

²⁹⁰⁸ Cf., e.g., 1 *Kgs* 1:50; Thucydides 3.81.5; Polybius 9.29.4; Diodorus Siculus 11.89.6–8; 16.58.6; 17.41.8; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 29.1, 5; *Alex.* 42.1; *Sulla* 31.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.43; and much fuller documentation at Acts 19:29.

In 24:19, Paul begins a sentence (literally, “But . . . certain²⁹⁰⁹ Jews from Asia”) that he fails to finish, omitting a verb. Leaving sentences incomplete could display intense emotion,²⁹¹⁰ including in forensic speeches.²⁹¹¹ Without having to meet a demand for evidence, Paul can insinuate his accusers’ guilt; insinuation was a standard rhetorical technique.²⁹¹² Rhetorical handbooks²⁹¹³ and practice²⁹¹⁴ had long sought to shift the charges of which one was accused to one’s accusers, whenever possible – and it is very possible in this case!

Another technique in judicial rhetoric was to question whether an opponent’s case ought to be heard in court.²⁹¹⁵ In this case, it should not be. The only real supposed witnesses (21:27–28) were absent. Orators used lack of witnesses against cases,²⁹¹⁶ requiring some special pleading from those who lacked them.²⁹¹⁷ Testifying was risky; rigorous cross-examination could reveal falsehoods, costing witnesses honor (Cicero, *Quinct.* 23.75), and witnesses themselves could be subjected to accusations to discredit them²⁹¹⁸ and harsh penalties for false accusations²⁹¹⁹ or frivolous lawsuits.²⁹²⁰ From the Roman standpoint, Lysias’s testimony would outweigh theirs in any case.²⁹²¹

Paul’s observation proves even more damaging if he can portray the alleged witnesses as effectively the original plaintiffs. Changing plaintiffs

²⁹⁰⁹ Paul probably knew who had accused him (19:8–9; cf. 21:29), but “certain persons” was often the language of polemic (e.g., Aeschines, *Ctes.* 1; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.36; Gal 2:4, 12; 1 Tim 1:3; further, Marshall, *Enmity*, 341–48).

²⁹¹⁰ See R. D. Anderson, *Glossary*, 41; cf. *Rhet. Her.* 4.30.41; Gal 2:2–4, 6; Rowe, “Style,” 149.

²⁹¹¹ Fronto in Naber p. 211; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.66.170.

²⁹¹² Lysias, *Or.* 3.44–45, §100; 31.20, §188; Cicero, *Agr.* 24.63–64; *Pis.* 2.3; *Vat.* 5.13; *Cael.* 13.31; 24.60; *Cat.* 1.6.14; *Verr.* 2.2.1.1, 2; Quintilian, *Decl.* 331.22; 335.13; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.13.206, 208–9; Apuleius, *Apol.* 98; E. W. Bower, “*Ephodos* and *Insinuatio* in Greek and Latin Rhetoric,” *CQ* 8 (1958): 224–30.

²⁹¹³ E.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 36, 1442b.6–9; Cicero, *Or. Brut.* 40.137; *De or.* 3.204; cf. Cicero, *Cat.* 2.3; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.3.138.

²⁹¹⁴ E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 3.1, §96; Aeschines, *Embassy* 3, 56, 69; *Ctesiphon* 69, 113, 156, 259; *Tim.* 179; Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.3.37; Cicero, *Sest.* 37.80; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.65; Apuleius, *Apol.* 56; Matt 12:24, 43–45; John 7:20; 8:44, 48.

²⁹¹⁵ Hermogenes, *Issues* 42.5–7; *Inv.* 3.5.141.

²⁹¹⁶ Lysias, *Or.* 7.19–23, §110; Isaeus, *Hagnias* 6; *Cleon.* 31–32, §37; Cicero, *Flacc.* 15.34; Hermogenes, *Issues* 45.21; *Inv.* 3.5.141–42; Libanius, *Decl.* 44.17.

²⁹¹⁷ Lysias 7.23, §110; Demosthenes, *Fals. leg.* 120; *Rhet. Alex.* 15, 1431b.42–1432a.3; Cicero, *Cael.* 9.22; Hermogenes, *Issues* 46.4–8.

²⁹¹⁸ E.g., Cicero, *Scaur.* 17.38; *Flacc.* 15.34.

²⁹¹⁹ Suetonius, *Aug.* 32.2; Josephus, *Life* 429; cf. Deut 19:18–19.

²⁹²⁰ On laws addressing false accusations, see Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 37.

²⁹²¹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 53; Josephus, *War* 2.333–35.

(here, from Asian Jews to chief priests) raised suspicions.²⁹²² The accuser's absence could stop the judicial process (*Cod. Iust.* 9.2.4), sometimes leading to a case's dismissal (*Dig.* 5.1.71).²⁹²³ The previous emperor often decided cases against absent plaintiffs, a practice standardized even in Roman law a few years after the scene depicted here;²⁹²⁴ absent plaintiffs could even face penalties.²⁹²⁵

Occasionally speakers concluded with an argument so decisive that it virtually closed the case (e.g., Cicero, *Quinct.* 25.78–80).²⁹²⁶ The present accusers were now on record (Acts 23:29) as advancing only a theological charge, i.e., challenging Paul's belief in the resurrection (24:20–21; cf. 23:6) – which was also the majority Judean belief (cf. 24:15). Changing charges during a trial was considered highly suspect;²⁹²⁷ it was disingenuous to invent new charges whenever old ones proved too hard to demonstrate! Defendants commonly raised the concern of malicious accusers.²⁹²⁸ If they respond by complaining that Lysias truncated their debate, they also invite examination of their mishandling of this Roman citizen (23:10; cf. 23:2).

24:22–27: FELIX'S PROCRASTINATION

Paul's case (esp. 24:19–21) appears airtight. By standards of education and rhetoric, Paul was more advanced than Felix himself, and in another setting might be well-appreciated (cf. 24:24–26). Other factors being equal, any impartial Roman judge would have dismissed the case at this point. Unfortunately, Paul's current accusers were Felix's most powerful Judean associates, and Felix was not a just judge. Had Paul not been a Roman citizen (16:37; 22:25–29; 23:27) with some allies, Felix surely would have handed him over. Such miscarriages of justice were frequent in the

²⁹²² See, e.g., Apuleius, *Apol.* 2.

²⁹²³ C. Gizewski, "Absentia," *BNP* 1:34–35; cf. Lucian, *Parl. G.* 18.

²⁹²⁴ Suetonius, *Claud.* 15.2; Dio Cassius 60.28.6; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 52–53. Against abandoning charges, see also Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.2.

²⁹²⁵ Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.10–12; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 3.54; in earlier Greek practice, *OCD*³ 1459; see especially G. Thür, "Epobelia," *BNP* 4:1158–59. A defendant's absence did not automatically entail condemnation (Paulus, *Sent.* 5.5.9; *Dig.* 48.19.5 pr.) but could be used to insinuate guilt (Aeschines, *Embassy* 6; Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 1.6.4).

²⁹²⁶ Speeches could also build toward an emotional climax; see, e.g., Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.13.162–63; 4.4.189, 191.

²⁹²⁷ Lysias, *Or.* 7.2, §108; Cicero, *Att.* 2.24; Quintilian, *Decl.* 301.19.

²⁹²⁸ E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 24; Cicero, *Rosc. Amer.* 2.6; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 1.1.95–96; Libanius, *Declam.* 36.1–2, 10; 44.70.

provinces. Paul's posthumous critics may count against him his ultimate execution; Luke instead highlights how miraculously he survived as long as he did.²⁹²⁹

Felix's knowledge about the Way (24:22), shared with his brother-in-law Agrippa I (cf. 26:26), is inevitable given the movement's size (21:20). Perhaps even some of Felix's own Caesarean soldiers were sympathizers (cf. earlier 10:1–7). Felix will know both the Nazarenes' political harmlessness and the aristocratic priests' implacable hostility against them;²⁹³⁰ as Lysias had reported, this is an internal Jewish dispute (23:29).

Felix was not friendly toward all Jerusalem's priests (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.162–63), but he was politically vulnerable and Paul's case was relatively trivial. The chief priests had secured the banishment of Felix's predecessor's (*War* 2.245–47), and a Jewish delegation from Caesarea soon after secured Felix's recall (*Ant.* 20.182). Thus Felix provides an excuse (24:22) and depends on inertia. Felix had earlier promised to decide the case once the accusers came (23:35); he is clearly stalling. An official could politely promise to send for people at an appropriate time that he never plans to happen,²⁹³¹ or postpone a case if its obvious outcome appeared inconvenient (Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.33). Nevertheless, adjourning a case without a verdict was within Felix's juridical authority.²⁹³²

Paul's relatively²⁹³³ light custody (24:23)²⁹³⁴ shows Luke's audience that Felix does not believe the charges.²⁹³⁵ Unlike most backlogged Judean prisoners,²⁹³⁶ Paul probably remains in the palace (23:35), which provides Paul safety (cf. 23:27) and Felix quick access (24:24–26). A favorable superior could help ensure even gentler guards, and the attention of a friendly

²⁹²⁹ Likewise, far from Paul's appeal to Caesar (25:10–12) producing only a disastrous execution, as some critics probably later assumed, it bought Paul more years of ministry than he would have had otherwise (25:3).

²⁹³⁰ Outside the NT, see also Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200.

²⁹³¹ Fictitiously, cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.22; *Apoll. K. Tyre* 21.

²⁹³² With Rapske, *Custody*, 164; on delays, 316–28. Laws regulating postponements in Roman private lawsuits (see E. Metzger, *A New Outline of the Roman Civil Trial* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1997], 10–13, 56), partly to limit delays (pp. 60, 91), would not restrict provincial governors.

²⁹³³ The lightest was house arrest (28:16; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.235; Rapske, *Custody*, 171), but this could increase risks of assassination (cf. 23:27).

²⁹³⁴ Cf., e.g., Josephus, *War* 3.408; much later, Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.17–33, 40; 8.5. Cf. Paul's access to gifts and persons in Phil 1:13; 4:14, 18, 22.

²⁹³⁵ Cf. similarly lighter punishment in Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.88; Plutarch, *Otho* 5.1; cf. Mark 15:45; John 19:22.

²⁹³⁶ Rapske, *Custody*, 166, citing Josephus, *War* 2.273; *Ant.* 20.215.

centurion could provide a daily bath and permit visitors (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.202).

Guards often allowed visits and provisions from friends,²⁹³⁷ but making the order explicit precludes otherwise possible extortion.²⁹³⁸ Prison rations prevented starvation, but prisoners otherwise were responsible for securing their own resources, usually through outside friends.²⁹³⁹ Early Christians often sought access to prisoners to help them,²⁹⁴⁰ though identifying with prisoners in this way could be risky.²⁹⁴¹ Like other imprisoned sages, Paul presumably continued teaching, and may have influenced Caesarea's Christian community (cf. 28:17–31)²⁹⁴² – meanwhile provoking more anger from some ethnically polarized locals (cf. 25:24).

Felix's royal Jewish wife Drusilla might appreciate Paul as a Jewish intellectual who could positively influence her husband (24:24). Drusilla was the third queen whom Felix married.²⁹⁴³ Now about twenty years old (see Josephus, *Ant.* 19.354), Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Agrippa I (*Ant.* 18.132; cf. Acts 12:1). When she was about fifteen, her brother Agrippa II (25:13) married her to Azizus king of Emesa, who even underwent circumcision to marry her (*Ant.* 20.138–39). Ignoring Roman policy's disapproval of governors marrying locals,²⁹⁴⁴ however, Felix reportedly used a Jewish Cypriote magician to entice her to leave Azizus for Felix (20.142–43).

Although Luke does not assume his audience's knowledge of Drusilla, he and some readers might well understand Felix's discomfort about moral issues in Acts 24:25. The elite could use teachers' lectures as a cultured leisure activity or dinner entertainment²⁹⁴⁵ – just so long as the discourse remained at an intellectual rather than a moral level (24:25).²⁹⁴⁶ Paul,

²⁹³⁷ Lysias, *Or.* 13.39–40, §133; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.8.21; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.202; Xenophon, *Eph.* 2.7; cf. Nepos 18 (Eumenes), 11.2.

²⁹³⁸ For such bribes, cf. Lucian, *Tox.* 30–31; *Peregr.* 12; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 7.36.

²⁹³⁹ Rapske, "Prison," 828–29; idem, *Custody*, 171, 209–16.

²⁹⁴⁰ Phil 2:25; 4:18; 2 Tim 4:13; Heb 13:3; Matt 25:36; Lucian, *Peregr.* 12.

²⁹⁴¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 388–90; cf. 2 Tim 1:8, 16.

²⁹⁴² Rapske, *Custody*, 357–58.

²⁹⁴³ Suetonius, *Claud.* 28; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9.

²⁹⁴⁴ J. J. O'Rourke, "Roman Law and the Early Church," pages 165–86 in *The Catacombs and the Colosseum* (ed. S. Benko and J. J. O'Rourke; Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1971), 181; cf. C. A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117–18.

²⁹⁴⁵ Cf., e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 1.10.9–11; Maximus of Tyre 22; Mark 6:20; W. J. Slater, "Introduction," pages 1–5 in *Dining in a Classical Context* (ed. W. J. Slater; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 2–3.

²⁹⁴⁶ Felix reportedly resented meddlesome advice (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.164).

however, speaks with boldness (cf. 4:13, 31; 28:31); faith in Christ (24:24) entails moral demands (24:25; cf. 24:16).²⁹⁴⁷ Resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous (24:15) entails *coming judgment* (24:25); not Felix, but God is the ultimate judge. Felix now puts off Paul (24:25), as he put off his accusers earlier (24:22).

Nevertheless, Paul's opportunity to speak to Felix (especially 24:24–25), Festus and Agrippa, as well as later to Caesar's tribunal (27:24), is providential, fulfilling the call for Jesus's followers to testify before kings and "governors" (Luke 21:12–13; cf. Acts 9:15).

Although Felix prevents guards from exploiting Paul (24:23), he appears ready to profit himself (24:26); if Paul could support Jerusalemites (24:17), why not the governor? Despite bribery's pervasiveness,²⁹⁴⁸ it was widely despised²⁹⁴⁹ and legally punishable, sometimes harshly.²⁹⁵⁰ People often bribed judges or juries.²⁹⁵¹ Shameful leaders might release prisoners if given sufficient bribes.²⁹⁵² As here, an official might keep captives in prison to secure their money, promising to consider their case when he had time (Plutarch, *Caes.* 2.4).

Although governors who refused bribes were praised²⁹⁵³ and Roman law disapproved of governors accepting gifts, the practice was common and rarely punished harshly.²⁹⁵⁴ In serious cases, however, governors were indicted for receiving bribes.²⁹⁵⁵ Involvement in bribery reportedly characterized some of Judea's governors in this period,²⁹⁵⁶ including Felix (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.163) and his predecessor (20.118–19, 127).

²⁹⁴⁷ On *self-control*, see more fully Keener, *Acts*, 4:3434–36.

²⁹⁴⁸ Justin, *Epit.* 11.11.6–8; 16.2.3; Cicero, *Att.* 4.19; *Verr.* 2.2.49.122; *Sest.* 25.55; 30.66; 49.105; 66.139; Nicolaus, *Aug.* 30; Velleius Paterculus 2.48.4; Suetonius, *Jul.* 13; Tacitus, *Agr.* 6; Josephus, *Ant.* 19.65; 20.183; *Life* 73, 196.

²⁹⁴⁹ Polybius 6.56.1–15; Cicero, *Fam.* 1.1.1; 3.11.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 22.5; 34.10; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 25.4–5; Exod 23:8; Deut 16:19.

²⁹⁵⁰ Lysias, *Or.* 21; 28.17, §181; 29.11, §182; Aeschines, *Tim.* 87; Polybius 6.56.1–4; Justin, *Epit.* 13.5.9; Livy 40.19.11; Valerius Maximus 6.3. ext. 3; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.4.24; Dio Cassius 54.16.1; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.207; 11Q19 51.16–18.

²⁹⁵¹ Valerius Maximus 9.1.7; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 97.2; Suetonius, *Dom.* 8.1; Longinus, *Subl.* 44.9; 2 Macc 4:45.

²⁹⁵² Polybius 38.18.4–5; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.1.4.9 (pirate chiefs); Josephus, *War* 2.273.

²⁹⁵³ Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 4. pref. 18; Plutarch, *Cic.* 36.2; Tacitus, *Agr.* 19; Menander Rhetor 2.10, 416.15.

²⁹⁵⁴ Pliny, *Ep.* 4.9.6–7, 17–18; cf. the cultural offensiveness of refusing gifts (e.g., Cicero, *Fam.* 14.3.1).

²⁹⁵⁵ E.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.20.51; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.11.2; cf. 6.5.2.

²⁹⁵⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.273, 277–79, 287; *Ant.* 20.205, 215, 253–56.

Provinces often accused former governors in Rome.²⁹⁵⁷ Judean leaders sometimes did so (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.283), even securing the banishment of Felix's predecessor (*Ant.* 20.136). They now accused Felix, who was spared only by his brother's intercession (*Ant.* 20.182).²⁹⁵⁸ Given the pending accusations, Felix had special reason to do the Jerusalem authorities "a favor" just before his departure (24:27; cf. 25:3, 9).²⁹⁵⁹

Some date the transition between Felix and Porcius Festus (24:27) to 55–56 CE, but most prefer 60 or (especially) 59 CE.²⁹⁶⁰ Festus was effective in suppressing unrest (*War* 2.271; *Ant.* 20.188) and showed some tolerance for Jewish customs with which he disagreed (*Ant.* 20.193–94). Unfortunately, his tenure seems brief and he died in office (*Ant.* 20.197).

Paul is a political problem. By referring Paul to the governor (23:30), Lysias evades direct responsibility; after Felix cannot transfer Paul's case to a more distant governor (23:34–35), he defers it until it becomes his successor's problem (24:27). (Recall Pilate's attempt to refer Jesus's case to Herod; Luke 23:7.) Paul's appeal to Caesar ultimately relieves Felix's successor of this political conundrum (25:10–12).

25:1–5: JERUSALEM AUTHORITIES DENOUNCE PAUL

In 25:1–12, Luke emphasizes again that Paul's famous, or infamous, custody in Rome does not indicate his genuine guilt. A new governor finds no proof against Paul; rather, Paul's very accusers are the true subverters of order and justice (25:3). (Again, evidence allows Luke to exploit the conventional rhetorical practice of reversing charges against the accusers.) Paul is compelled to go to Rome as a prisoner not because of misconduct but because of messy provincial politics, specifically in Judea, a province notorious to the Romans (especially after the war of 66–73) for its resistance to Roman order.

Ironically, had it not been for the intervention of Paul's enemies (25:2–3), Paul could have languished in custody in Caesarea much longer. Provincial

²⁹⁵⁷ E.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 2.11.2; 3.4.2, 8; 3.9.5, 17; 4.9.2–3; 5.20.1–2; 6.13.1–2; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.38, 66–69, 70; 4.15, 36; 6.29; 13.30, 33, 43, 52; 14.18, 28, 46; 16.21.

²⁹⁵⁸ His brother Pallas probably no longer held office (Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.14), yet retained favor (cf. 13.23; 14.65).

²⁹⁵⁹ For governors releasing prisoners for corrupt reasons, see, e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.31.4; 10.32.1–2; Josephus, *War* 2.273; *Ant.* 20.215.

²⁹⁶⁰ In Josephus, *Life* 13–16, Felix is governor when Josephus is twenty-six and Poppaea is Nero's "wife." See Riesner, *Early Period*, 223–27.

prisoners were often “‘lost’ in the bureaucratic machinery, spending months or years longer in custody awaiting ‘discovery’.”²⁹⁶¹ The accession of a new governor meant new administrative priorities, a new shuffling of cases, and thus opportunity for Jerusalem’s elite to revisit cases on which Felix had proved intractable (24:27).

Lest Luke’s audience view all Roman administrators through the lens of Pilate or Felix (or negative Herodian princes), Festus and Agrippa II come closer to the expected value of fairness. That Festus took only three days to get to the Jerusalem leaders after his arrival (25:1) shows that he is an efficient administrator (cf. 25:6), in contrast to Felix (24:27).²⁹⁶²

The official chief priest is no longer Ananias (23:2; 24:1), but now Ishmael son of Phabi (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.179),²⁹⁶³ appointed by Agrippa II (see Acts 25:13) probably shortly before Festus’s accession (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.182). The chief priests and other leaders were hostile toward each other at this point (*Ant.* 20.180), but apparently found common cause in hostility toward Paul.

Even had Felix closed Paul’s case (and he had not), a case could be reopened if the accusers claimed “fresh evidence” (Pliny, *Ep.* 7.6.10).²⁹⁶⁴ Relocating the case could be more complicated,²⁹⁶⁵ but a governor had authority to do as he chose. Their desire for a “favor” (25:3; cf. 24:27; 25:3, 9; the Greek text of 25:11, 16)²⁹⁶⁶ reminds Luke’s audience that Paul’s Roman custody stems not from genuine sedition but from political accommodations (as Festus himself knows, 25:10).

Changing the venue to Jerusalem would be more convenient for Paul’s accusers and exert more pressure on the new governor. It might also facilitate the neglect of Paul’s file, with its exclusively religious charge based on Lysias’s observation in 23:28–29, a neglect that would prove disastrous to Paul’s case. Luke may discover the planned ambush (25:3) from another leak (23:16) or simply infer it (historians often made inferences), based on previous information (23:14–15). Precedents in Paul’s file made his case more difficult than that of revolutionaries, unless Paul’s case were resolved extrajudicially (25:3), a

²⁹⁶¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 321.

²⁹⁶² For valuing efficiency, cf., e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.17A.3; 10.18.3; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.107.

²⁹⁶³ Though contrast *Ant.* 18.34.

²⁹⁶⁴ Discontinued cases could renewed after a time (G. Schieman, “Abolitio,” *BNP* 1:24), though the same charge should not be tried twice (Hermogenes, *Issues* 42.15–19).

²⁹⁶⁵ Despite 22:3, they could not treat Jerusalem as his legal residence, allowing him to be tried there (Gaius, *Dig.* 50.1.29); see Acts 21:39.

²⁹⁶⁶ Tannehill, *Acts*, 306. Favor (*charis*) could distort justice (*Rhet. Alex.* 15, 1431b.40); it was understood that it might justifiably mitigate punishment on some occasions (Lucian, *Men.* 13).

Judean “right” (cf. comment on 21:30) earlier obstructed by Lysias’s interference (21:31–33). But such “accidents” would have to occur early in Festus’s tenure, since he would quickly become wise to them.

While Festus may be eager to establish cordial relations with the leaders, he is not ready to begin his tenure by creating exceptions to normal protocol.²⁹⁶⁷ Rome made the mixed coastal city of Caesarea Judea’s capital, rather than the holy city preferred by Judeans. Giving in to the request too readily could invite further concessions toward Judean nationalism down the road. Given the accumulation of political favor for Paul’s enemies, however, it is only divine favor by which Luke can theologically account for his survival (23:11).

A Closer Look: Trials of Jesus and Paul

As in ch. 24, Paul’s hearings in 25–26 resemble those of Jesus in Luke’s passion narrative, and fulfill Jesus’s prophecies about Christians testifying before courts (cf. also Stephen in 7:56–60).²⁹⁶⁸ O’Toole lists twelve similarities between Acts 25–26 and Luke 23:1–25, including the following:²⁹⁶⁹

1. Both sections are structured as hearings.
2. There are four main characters in each (the Roman governor; a Herodian prince; Jewish accusers; the defendant).
3. The hearings are held at the procurator’s instigation (Luke 23:6–7; Acts 25:22ff.).
4. The defendant is “led in” (Luke 23:1; Acts 25:6; cf. 25:22ff.).
5. The authorities find God’s agent innocent (Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22; Acts 25:18, 25a; 26:31). Each governor three times pronounces the defendant innocent.
6. The defendant is accused by the high priestly elite (Luke 23:2, 5, 10; Acts 25:2, 7, 11, 15–17; 26:2), who demand death (Luke 23:18, 21, 23; Acts 25:24) for acts against Israel and Caesar (Luke 23:2; Acts 25:8).
7. An appearance before a Herodian ruler, who happens to be in town (albeit with good historical reasons) and wants to see the prisoners (Luke 23:8; Acts 25:22).
8. Although the defendant is innocent, he cannot be freed (Luke 23:16–25; Acts 26:32; cf. 28:18).

²⁹⁶⁷ Moreover, Festus is about to leave for Caesarea (25:4), so sending for Paul to bring him to Jerusalem for trial was superfluous.

²⁹⁶⁸ See especially R. F. O’Toole, “‘Luke’s Notion of ‘Be Imitators of Me as I Am of Christ’ in Acts 25–26,” *BTB* 8 (4, 1978): 155–56.

²⁹⁶⁹ See especially R. F. O’Toole, *Acts 26: The Christological Climax of Paul’s Defense* (Acts 22:1–26:36) (AnBib 78; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 22–24.

Still, the very parallels reveal asymmetry in Luke's treatment. Luke has fuller information about Paul's trials, but this alone does not explain the lengthy dialogue in Acts 25:14–22. This section climaxes (though does not conclude) Luke's apologetic for Paul, hence for the legal status of the gentile Christian movement he had advanced. ****

25:6–9: DEFENSE BEFORE FESTUS

Unlike Felix (24:27), Festus acts swiftly and efficiently (25:6).²⁹⁷⁰ Taking *his seat on the tribunal* reveals that this is an official hearing, unlike Felix's informal visits for personal purposes (24:24–26).²⁹⁷¹ Accusers' *serious charges* (25:7) presumably include those in 21:28 and 24:5–6 plus a new one²⁹⁷² (opposing Caesar; cf. 17:7) answered in 25:8. Besides these charges, *which they could not prove* (25:7; see comment on 24:13),²⁹⁷³ they apparently also made charges based on Judean customs, which Festus did not understand (25:19; cf. 24:20–21).

Paul's tersely summarized response in 25:8 might name and then refute opponents' charges.²⁹⁷⁴ The charge regarding Caesar requires the governor to try the case himself (25:9). But as a Jew, Paul could honor Caesar without worshipping him,²⁹⁷⁵ just as the Jerusalem temple offered sacrifices on the emperor's behalf²⁹⁷⁶ but not to him.²⁹⁷⁷

Although by now Festus's aides (25:12) will have consulted Paul's case file,²⁹⁷⁸ Festus is politically astute enough to wish to accommodate local

²⁹⁷⁰ Historians could include round characters (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.60.1–2; 8.61.1–3). Festus is imperfect but superior to Felix (S. Walton, "Trying Paul or Trying Rome? Judges and Accused in the Roman Trials of Paul in Acts," pages 122–41 in *Luke-Acts and Empire* (ed. D. Rhoads, D. Esterline, and J. W. Lee; PrTMS 151; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011, 138–39).

²⁹⁷¹ In a capital case, a governor could issue a formal condemnation only *pro tribunali* (Blinzler, *Trial*, 240; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 47).

²⁹⁷² Changing charges risks the objection that one is inventing them (Lysias, *Or.* 7.2, §108).

²⁹⁷³ If the prosecution failed to offer fresh evidence, a renewed case could be dismissed (Pliny, *Ep.* 7.6.12–13). Research could have produced affidavits from Asian Jews visiting for festivals, but despite Luke's focus, Paul was probably not significant enough to them to merit such research.

²⁹⁷⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 26; Apuleius, *Apol.* 27–28 (with elaboration in 29–65), 61, 67.

²⁹⁷⁵ For Diaspora Jews and Christians, see Harland, *Associations*, 213–37; cf. 1 Pet 2:13.

²⁹⁷⁶ E.g., Philo, *Embassy* 232; Josephus, *War* 2.197, 409; *Ant.* 18.257–59; *Ag. Ap.* 2.77.

²⁹⁷⁷ Others sacrificed to the emperor (Seneca, *Dial.* 9.14.9; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.258), in addition to offering sacrifices and prayers on his behalf (*Res Gestae* 9.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.35–36, 52, 100; Fronto, *Ad M. Caes.* 3.10; 5.25 [40]; *Ad Ant. Imp.* 1.2.1).

²⁹⁷⁸ Felix's records would remain available; see K. Vössing, "Archive," *BNP* 1:1023–27 (1026).

leadership, if possible (25:9). Rome ruled through local elites, and reciprocity conventions meant that Festus could win favors for his policies by granting favors where he could afford them (25:9). Historically, Festus worked peacefully with local rulers (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.193–94) and suppressed sources of unrest (*War* 2.271; *Ant.* 20.188), one of which the rulers accused Paul of being (Acts 25:7; 24:5). Nevertheless, Festus graciously permits the articulate Roman citizen to express any concerns (25:9).²⁹⁷⁹

25:10–12: APPEAL TO CAESAR

Unlike Jesus, who did not defend himself against the false (Luke 20:22–25) charge of opposing Caesar (23:2), Paul the Roman citizen appeals to Caesar himself (Acts 25:11–12, 21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19). Still, Paul is *not trying to escape death* (25:11); defendants sometimes welcomed death as a penalty if found guilty, thus expressing certainty that they were innocent.²⁹⁸⁰

After his lengthy custody, Paul recognizes his only hope of getting a hearing not influenced by Judean political considerations is to remove the venue from Judea by appealing to Caesar (25:11). Felix would have deferred the case indefinitely; Paul avails himself of the new and perhaps only window of opportunity now. This appeal merits Luke's attention both historically and because it mirrors Acts' theological direction: Paul knows that he cannot obtain justice in Jerusalem (25:9), and so instead appeals to Rome (25:10–12).

As Paul undoubtedly senses, his appeal to Caesar will also resolve Festus's dilemma. Paul exposes Festus's readiness to accommodate Paul's accusers as blatantly political (*as you very well know*, 25:10).²⁹⁸¹ Paul was too small an issue in the larger scheme of Judea's administration to be freed at the expense of the local leaders' annoyance, yet not guilty or

²⁹⁷⁹ One could claim a venue to be hostile, seeking to reduce prejudice, but normally could not alter it (Cicero, *Balb.* 1.1–2). Someone may have drawn Festus's attention to Lysias's report (Acts 23:30).

²⁹⁸⁰ E.g., Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.3.37, 49; 5.11.32; *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1437a.14–17; Josephus, *Life* 141–42; cf. Aeschines, *Embassy* 5; *Tim.* 122; *Vit. Aes.* 128; Libanius, *Declam.* 44.42; Ps 7:3–5.

²⁹⁸¹ Festus knows Paul's innocence (explicit in 25:25), but stating that publicly would force Festus to acquit him. Defendants sometimes challenged judges they feared biased against them (*Rhet. Alex.* 19, 1433b.19–23; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.1.21).

inconsequential enough to be summarily convicted.²⁹⁸² Paul's appeal to Caesar offers Festus a solution too convenient to resist.

Caesar's tribunal (25:10) contrasts with that of Festus (25:6), Caesar's representative in the chain of command (cf. Luke 7:8). Paul knows that the Spirit wants him to reach Rome anyway (Acts 19:21). Most of Luke's audience will recognize that the emperor here is Nero, whose evils were widely remembered.²⁹⁸³ Before the fire of 64 CE, however, Nero was not persecuting Christians, and at the time of Paul's appeal (c. 59 CE), some positive influences on Nero remain.²⁹⁸⁴

Roman governors sometimes sent prisoners on to Rome for trial²⁹⁸⁵ or punishment.²⁹⁸⁶ Yet Paul's earlier desire to visit Rome (19:21; Rom 15:23–28) supports the idea that Paul played a role in this relocation, as Luke claims here. Moreover, Roman citizens were sent to Rome for trial more frequently;²⁹⁸⁷ eventually, they may have been sent routinely (Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31), at least in capital cases (where most would exercise their right of appeal),²⁹⁸⁸ uncertain cases (10.74.3), or where (as here) the local venue might be prejudiced against them.²⁹⁸⁹ The Christians that Pliny detained who were Roman citizens he sent to Rome for trial (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.4), instead of simply executing them as he did the others (10.96.3).

Citizens normally appealed only after a negative verdict, but exceptions could be made if they feared a hostile venue or if they wanted to remove

²⁹⁸² Opponents' status could produce defendants' protests against partiality (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 17); pleas for impartiality were common (e.g., *Lysias*, *Or.* 15.1, §144).

²⁹⁸³ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.134; 21.6; Plutarch, *D.V.* 32, *Mor.* 567F; Pliny, *Ep.* 1.5.1; 3.5.5; 5.5.3; 6.31.9; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.72; Suetonius, *Nero* passim (e.g., 38); Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.1.19–20; 1.25.22; 4.5.17; Juvenal, *Sat.* 4.136–39; 8.211–30; 10.15–18; 12.129; for later imperial propaganda, P. Kragelund, "Nero's *Luxuria*, in Tacitus and in the *Octavia*," *CQ* 50 (2, 2000): 494–515; for more mixed views, see, e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.4; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.154.

²⁹⁸⁴ They end in 62 CE (Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.51–56); one was Seneca, brother of Gallio (Acts 18:12).

²⁹⁸⁵ Josephus, *Life* 13; *War* 2.243; cf. *Ant.* 20.131.

²⁹⁸⁶ *War* 2.253; cf. Acts 27:42.

²⁹⁸⁷ Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.10; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.57.2. Sometimes sending petitions was sufficient (*Ep.* 10.59).

²⁹⁸⁸ A right of Roman citizens provided by earlier Valerian and Porcian laws; see *OCD*³ 752; cf. Livy 10.9.4–5; P. Garnsey, "The *Lex Iulia* and Appeal under the Empire," *JRS* 56 (1966): 167–89; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 58–60; Rapske, *Custody*, 48–56. Most scholars have abandoned the idea of clear demarcation between two kinds of appeals (Rapske, *Custody*, 186–88; Rowe, *World*, 82, following P. Garnsey, "The Criminal Jurisdiction of Governors," *JRS* 58 (1968): 51–59).

²⁹⁸⁹ Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.3; Plutarch, *Caes.* 4.2.

further suspicion.²⁹⁹⁰ Some think that governors could not legally (or politically) deny certain kinds of appeals;²⁹⁹¹ others suggest that it depended on the appellant's status or other factors.²⁹⁹² Unlike Festus (Josephus, *War* 2.271–72), some provincial governors would ignore appeals (*War* 2.308). Exercising some freedom, Festus consults his *consilium* (Acts 25:12) and ultimately decides (25:25) to honor the appeal. Transferring Paul relieves Felix of grounds for conflict with the chief priests – especially if he has an expert, Romanized Jewish opinion in support (25:19–27).

Festus's *council* (25:12) is presumably his *consilium*, his staff functioning as advisory council and consisting of his *consilarii* or *assessors*.²⁹⁹³ They might share his dinner table and entertainments.²⁹⁹⁴ Some would be more informed in Roman laws than were governors (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.177). Irregular appeals might naturally invite consultation with such advisors (Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.11–12).

25:13–22: DISCUSSING PAUL WITH AGRIPPA

Paul's trials are not tragedy, but God's sovereign plan to grant opportunities for his gospel in elevated settings (Luke 21:12–15). In this private scene (though even more so in the private scene in Acts 26:30–32) Luke reveals what Festus surely believed about Paul's case apart from political pressures. Paul's accusers are not eager to follow Roman procedure (25:15–16), and Festus knows that the charges are simply theological disagreements (25:18–19). Emphasizing the more benevolent side of rulers, Luke may contrast these mostly just rulers with Pilate, Felix, Antipas, and Agrippa I.

Although ancient narrators could believe that God inspired them with supernatural insight,²⁹⁹⁵ ancient historians also could construct scenes,

²⁹⁹⁰ See Schnabel, *Acts*, 993, with documentation; Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.11–12. For pardons during trials, see G. Schieman, "Indulgentia," *BNP* 6:793–94.

²⁹⁹¹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 62–64; Barrett, *Acts*, 1131; Tajra, *Trial*, 151.

²⁹⁹² Rapske, *Custody*, 56–62, 188; J. C. Lentz, Jr., *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS 77; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168–70.

²⁹⁹³ E.g., Sherwin-White, *Society*, 48–49; on *consilia*, see, e.g., W. W. Buckland, *A Text-Book of Roman Law from Augustus to Justinian* (3rd ed.; rev. P. Stein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 635; J. A. Crook, *Legal Advocacy in the Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 66–67, 99; cf. Cicero, *Quinct.* 1.4; 2.1; 6.1; 10.1; 30.91; Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.1; Suetonius, *Nero* 15; Philo, *Embassy* 254.

²⁹⁹⁴ Cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.13–14.

²⁹⁹⁵ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.37; R. G. Hall, "Revealed History: A Jewish and Christian Technique of Interpreting the Past" (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1986), 13–46; cf. 2 Kgs 6:12.

especially those including speech, based on inference.²⁹⁹⁶ Luke could infer the substance of the present scene from public events in 25:24–27. He would not invent Agrippa's participation; Agrippa remained alive as late as 93, hence was probably still alive when Luke wrote.²⁹⁹⁷

A Closer Look: Agrippa II and Bernice

On any first-century date, that Luke appears to presuppose his audience's prior knowledge of Agrippa II and Bernice (Acts 25:13) is not surprising, given their prominent role in subsequent events in Judea. They, along with Drusilla (24:24), were children of Agrippa I (12:1; see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.132). Marcus Julius Agrippa (Agrippa II) was born in 27 CE to King Agrippa I and his wife Cyprus (Josephus, *War* 2.220). He was seventeen when his father Agrippa I died (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.354), an event reported in Acts 12:23. His youth precluded his immediate reign (*Ant.* 19.360–63), but Rome soon entrusted him with territories (*War* 2.223, 247; *Ant.* 20.138–39, 159). Agrippa II's own palace was at Caesarea Philippi, his administrative capital.²⁹⁹⁸ He was supportive of Jewish causes (*War* 2.245; *Ant.* 20.9–10, 135),²⁹⁹⁹ though never at the expense of Rome (*War* 2.337–38; *Life* 340);³⁰⁰⁰ he and Bernice advocated peaceful Judean-Roman coexistence (*War* 2.344–406).

Interested in balancing gender representation, Luke pairs Agrippa with his sister Bernice. Historically, however, they clearly were together at this time. Berenice was born in 28 CE and married Marcus in 41 CE, around the age of thirteen (*Ant.* 19.276). Her husband apparently died soon after their marriage (*Ant.* 19.276–77); her father then married her to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, before she turned sixteen;³⁰⁰¹ this husband-uncle died when she was about twenty-one (*Ant.* 20.104). She then remained with her brother, M. Iulius Agrippa II, for several years, leading to probably

²⁹⁹⁶ Cf., e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.57; 15.59; *Hist.* 2.74; Quintus Curtius 3.2.11–16; Judg 3:24–25; 1 Macc 6:10–13; 2 Macc 3:37–39; Josephus, *War* 2.319; *Ant.* 19.38–45, 53–58, 78–83; contrast the unusual rigor of Polybius 2.56.10; 3.33.17–18. In biographies, see Hägg, *Biography*, 3.

²⁹⁹⁷ Normally one would not substantially falsify information when eyewitnesses remained (Josephus, *Life* 359–60; *Ag. Ap.* 1.50–51).

²⁹⁹⁸ J. F. Wilson and V. Tzaferis, "Baniyas Dig Reveals King's Palace," *BAR* 24 (1, 1998): 54–61, 85.

²⁹⁹⁹ Cf. S. Qedar, "Two Lead Weights of Herod Antipas and Agrippa II and the Early History of Tiberias," *Israel Numismatic Journal* 9 (1986–87): 29–35.

³⁰⁰⁰ See J. Meyshan, "A New Coin Type of Agrippa II and Its Meaning," *IEJ* 11 (4, 1961): 181–83.

³⁰⁰¹ *Ant.* 19.277, 354; *Ant.* 20.145; *War* 2.217. Events at her father's death humiliated her and her sisters (*Ant.* 19.356–57, 363).

false suspicions of incest.³⁰⁰² In 53 or 54, therefore, she married a ruler in Cilicia, after her wealth apparently persuaded him to accept circumcision (*Ant.* 20.145–46). She soon found the marriage intolerable, however, abandoning him (*Ant.* 20.146). By the time that Luke depicts, and continuing for years afterward, she remained close to her brother.³⁰⁰³ She later had a well-known love affair with Titus, Vespasian's son.³⁰⁰⁴

Pious by Herodian standards (*War* 2.313), she later risked her life to protect her people (*War* 2.310–12, 314, 333), yet was hated by most revolutionaries (*War* 2.426–27). Perhaps relevant to Acts 26:30–31, she could sometimes influence (Josephus, *Life* 343, 355) or even judge (Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.pr.19) legal proceedings.³⁰⁰⁵ ****

Visiting and congratulating new officials (Acts 25:13) was common practice;³⁰⁰⁶ failure to do so could cause offense, unless one had good excuse (Pliny, *Ep.* 9.37.1–5). Agrippa regularly followed this practice.³⁰⁰⁷

Unlike Felix (24:22, 24), Festus needs a clearer understanding of Judean issues, as both he (25:20) and the defendant (26:24–26) recognize. He needs help to explain to the emperor why he is forwarding an appeal of a person who appears innocent yet cannot simply be freed. If ruling priestly families oppose Paul (25:2), Festus can go “over their head” from a Roman perspective by appealing to Agrippa II, the Judean king authorized by Rome to appoint high priests (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.179, 196).³⁰⁰⁸

Luke is a shrewd and entertaining observer of human character: like Lysias (cf. 21:32–38; 23:27),³⁰⁰⁹ in 25:16 Festus portrays his own initial behavior as more generous toward Paul than it actually was in the narrative (25:9). Still, Romans prided themselves in *aequitas romana*, Roman fairness; accusations could not be anonymous (cf. 24:19; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.97), and defendants must have the opportunity to make their case before the judge and accusers,³⁰¹⁰ especially when the stakes were serious (Pliny, *Ep.* 2.11.9).

³⁰⁰² Later reported by the satirist Juvenal (*Sat.* 6.156–60); denied by Josephus, *Ant.* 20.145.

³⁰⁰³ So Hemer, *Acts in History*, 173, interprets *War* 2.310–12 and *Life* 48 thus (which texts at least suggest their close cooperation); topographically, cf. *War* 2.426.

³⁰⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2; Suetonius, *Tit.* 7.1–2; Dio Cassius 65.15.3–5; 66.18.1.

³⁰⁰⁵ Cf. M. R. Young-Widmaier, “Quintilian’s Legal Representation of Julia Berenice,” *Historia* 51 (1, 2002): 124–29.

³⁰⁰⁶ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.13 (to the emperor); Pliny, *Ep.* 4.8.1; 10.43.3; Plutarch, *Alex.* 14.1; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.1.

³⁰⁰⁷ Josephus, *War* 2.309, 481; 3.29; 4.498–501; see further O’Toole, *Acts* 26, 16–17.

³⁰⁰⁸ Agrippa had favor with Nero, who had recently expanded his territories (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.159); at some point he earned the title “friend of Caesar” (*OGIS* 419).

³⁰⁰⁹ And frequently others; e.g., Exod 32:22–24; Judg 20:5.

³⁰¹⁰ Commentators cite Ulpian, *Digest* 48.17.1; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 3.8.54 (3.54.222).

Lack of such due process revealed corruption (Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.6; Pliny, *Ep.* 4.11.6).³⁰¹¹

Crimes that I was expecting (Acts 25:19) might mean crimes recognizable as such under Roman law.³⁰¹² Festus seems bemused by mere disagreements about their *religion*.³⁰¹³ His benign skepticism toward Jesus's resurrection (25:19) matches that of some of Jesus's own followers earlier (Luke 24:23), but he clearly misunderstands resurrection (cf. Acts 17:18). Festus's admission of being *at a loss* (25:20) might politely imply his need for Agrippa's counsel (25:26).³⁰¹⁴

Agrippa takes the hint, happy to offer his expertise to Festus and so solidify their new relationship (25:22). Paul's case cements the friendship of Festus and Agrippa as Jesus's case had cemented that of Pilate and Antipas (Luke 23:12).³⁰¹⁵ Afterward, Agrippa worked well with Festus (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.189–93), sometimes better than with the chief priests (20.189–92, 196).³⁰¹⁶

Agrippa could best help Festus describe the case (Acts 25:20, 26) if he hears Paul. Agrippa might also have some academic interest, already knowing about Christians (26:26–28). If so, his interest recalls for Luke's audience Antipas's earlier interest in hearing Jesus (Luke 9:9; 23:8).

25:23–26:1: PAUL'S ROYAL AUDIENCE

Paul's defense speeches (before Jerusalem's crowds, the Council, governors, and now Agrippa) may climax his earlier ministry, but the speech before Agrippa (25:23–26:32) certainly climaxes the defense speeches. Paul was a citizen of both Jewish and Roman worlds, and now addresses a hearer competent to understand both, as he himself did. Speaking before both a king and a governor, Paul addresses his most socially elevated audience in

³⁰¹¹ In Herod's court, see also Josephus, *Ant.* 16.258.

³⁰¹² Sherwin-White, *Society*, 50; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 131.

³⁰¹³ The Greek term here can mean superstition; but Festus would not so negatively depict all Jewish religion to Agrippa, hellenized as the latter was.

³⁰¹⁴ Cf. Dio Chrysostom's rhetorical invitation for advice (*Or.* 47.12, 13, 14, 19, 20), also using the present Greek term *aporeô* (47.18).

³⁰¹⁵ On such political *amicitia*, or friendship, see C. S. Keener, "Friendship," *DNTB* 380–88 (381).

³⁰¹⁶ Agrippa II freely exercised his legal authority from the Romans to replace high priests (*Ant.* 20.179, 195–96, 203, 223).

Acts so far,³⁰¹⁷ partly fulfilling Luke 12:11–12; 21:12–13; Acts 9:15. Paul's speech also confirms that his interests are ultimately theological, not directly political (26:2–29).

Romans lavishly displayed their rank,³⁰¹⁸ but the elite's pomp in 25:23 contrasts conspicuously with Paul's chains (26:29; cf. Eph 6:20). This prominent audience could impact the tolerance accorded Jesus's movement in Judea. Like Felix (24:27), Lysias (23:26) is probably no longer in Judea; the tribunate was often a political stepping-stone. But Caesarea's five cohorts will each have a tribune (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.364), most drawn from the equestrian order; they and civic leaders are probably present to honor Agrippa,³⁰¹⁹ the hearing's primary audience (25:24–26:1). For some of Luke's audience, the military tribunes might seem ominous; less than a decade later, the Judean-Roman war would erupt in Caesarea.

With some dramatic hyperbole, Festus depicts all Judeans as arrayed against Paul, still *shouting that he ought not to live any longer* (25:24; as in 22:22). Festus's depiction of Paul's situation as a Jewish-Roman issue means that if even a Judean king exonerates Paul, the case may be regarded as settled. Festus plainly declares that Paul has *done nothing deserving death* (25:25; cf. Acts 23:29; 26:31; Luke 23:15); just as a governor and Herodian ruler three times declare Jesus not guilty (Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22; cf. also 23:47),³⁰²⁰ so here a governor and Herodian king three times declare Paul not guilty (Acts 23:29; 25:25; 26:31).

Given the case's irregularity, Festus needs counsel in framing the cover letter to Rome (25:27), lest he be accused of referring work frivolously (which sometimes happened, cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.6). Even a person of the highest status laid his honor on the line when making a recommendation to the emperor (*Ep.* 2.9.2).

The accuser's and defendants' petitions presumably would be part of the file (Pliny *Ep.* 10.59), but the dossier also required a cover letter summarizing the case's facts in a way that displayed some investigation.³⁰²¹ Sending a report along with the prisoner was a mandatory procedure.³⁰²²

³⁰¹⁷ Luke nowhere narrates the appearance before Caesar's tribunal (27:24), perhaps because of its outcome (though a second imprisonment afterward is also possible).

³⁰¹⁸ See Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 117.

³⁰¹⁹ Cf. analogous arrangements in Josephus, *Ant.* 16.30; 17.93; Johnson, *Acts*, 428.

³⁰²⁰ The threefold pattern of Pilate's claim in Luke's passion narrative appears probably independently in John (John 18:38; 19:4, 6).

³⁰²¹ E.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.4; 10.74.3; 10.96.3–4.

³⁰²² Commentators cite Ulpian in *Digest* 49.6.1. See further Winter, "Official Proceedings," 309.

Whereas Agrippa invites Paul to speak *for yourself* (26:1), Paul uses his own story to speak also for Christ, the focus of most of his defense, as Jesus had promised (Luke 21:13). Stretching out the right hand was a common rhetorical gesture.³⁰²³

26:2–23: PAUL RECOUNTS HIS EXPERIENCE

This is the climax of Paul's defenses, fitting his mission to speak before kings (9:15),³⁰²⁴ and suggested even by the concentration of *apologeō* language (22:1; 24:10; 25:8, 16; 26:1, 2, and 24).³⁰²⁵

This is not technically a trial, but a hearing to decide the charges to be forwarded to Rome. Since this hearing does not determine Paul's fate but the religious nature of the case (Acts 25:25–27), Paul promotes not his innocence here but Christ's gospel. This version of Paul's conversion and call emphasizes Paul's calling to turn people to eternal life (26:18), just as Paul is now hoping to persuade King Agrippa (26:28–29). If Paul succeeds even in showing the faith to be plausible and pious, he will serve the cause of continuing tolerance for it. In a legal system that favored the powerful, Paul's eloquent voice offers a defense not only for himself but for the movement he represents.

In 26:2–32, a king who understands the Jewish messianic doctrine finds no political threat in Paul's preaching of "another king" (17:7; cf. Luke 19:38; 23:2–3, 38). Paul shows that, far from being a criminal, he preaches in obedience to divine revelation, and his message is grounded in the historic hope of Israel and the Scriptures.

This speech represents not only the climax of Paul's defense speeches, but also the third extended account of his conversion in the Book of Acts (9:1–8; 22:2–21). For that reason, I address some material here only

³⁰²³ Cf., e.g., Apollonius Rhodius 1.344; Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.3; Plutarch, *Caes.* 44.6; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.25.541; R. Hurschmann, "Gestures: Greece and Rome," *BNP* 5:832–39 (832, 837); J. Hall, "Cicero and Quintilian on the Oratorical Use of Hand Gestures," *CQ* 54 (1, 2004): 143–60; Shiell, *Reading Acts*, 47–78.

³⁰²⁴ Hence its unusually elegant style; see Johnson, *Acts*, 431, 440; Witherington, *Acts*, 736–37. The exordium is 26:2–3 and the disproportionately long *narratio* runs from 26:4 to at least 26:18 (Quesnel, "Analyse rhétorique," 173–74; Winter, "Official Proceedings," 330) or to 26:20 or 26:23; the proofs should be longer, but Paul cannot complete his speech. Luke has provided proofs for the *propositio* (26:22–23) in earlier speeches (7:2–53; 13:16–47; 15:15–18; cf. Luke 24:44–45).

³⁰²⁵ With O'Toole, *Acts* 26, 35–36; cf. F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1931), 223–24.

cursorily, though Luke's repetition is intended to reinforce the content. As was rhetorically appropriate, Luke and Paul present Paul's story differently for different audiences, yet with a consistent nucleus of events.³⁰²⁶ Each account functions as complementary to the other accounts.³⁰²⁷ Given the OT allusions in distinctively defining Paul's mission in 26:16–18, this passage links Paul with the OT prophets. (Thus in 26:27 Paul asks Agrippa if he believes the prophets.) Understood in this manner, his revelation from God (26:13–18) stands in continuity with his ancestral faith (26:22), an ethnic religion that Rome already tolerated.

In 26:2–11, Paul's proem and beginning of his *narratio* emphasize his *êthos*; while he has appealed to Caesar, he remains faithful to his ancestral faith. The charges against him are entirely theological. A defendant could count himself fortunate to be heard by a fair or knowledgeable judge (Apuleius, *Apol.* 1);³⁰²⁸ Paul can offer more praise here than for Felix in 24:10. The priests did not appreciate Agrippa II's piety (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.189–91, 216–18),³⁰²⁹ but the issue here is his knowledge. In 26:2–3, Paul also respectfully echoes Festus's introduction for Agrippa ("King Agrippa," 26:2; 25:26; "especially," 26:3; 25:26).

Speakers often requested the judge or audience to listen patiently (26:3);³⁰³⁰ ironically, however, Paul's hearers do *not* allow him to finish his speech (26:24, 28). They hear enough to decide his case, but refuse to embrace his message. In 26:4–5, Paul highlights his attested pious Judean background, yet expressed in Greek language that would appeal to his rhetorically sensitive hearers.³⁰³¹ Appeal to witnesses,³⁰³² public

³⁰²⁶ Cf. how Jesus's resurrection remains fairly constant in the different evangelistic speeches (in 2:24–32; 3:15; 13:30–37; 17:31; for the resurrection as the central summary, cf. 1:22; 4:33), as in other early Christian preaching (1 Cor 15:3–4). See Witherington, "Editing," 335–44; idem, *Acts*, 309. As Witherington, *Acts*, 311, notes, differences on minutiae did not disturb ancient historians.

³⁰²⁷ C. W. Hedrick, "Paul's Conversion/Call: A Comparative Analysis of the Three Reports in Acts," *JBL* 100 (3, 1981): 415–32 (432, arguing for more traditional material in chaps. 9 and 22); cf. E. M. Humphrey, *And I Turned to See the Voice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 97–99.

³⁰²⁸ For expressing confidence in judges' ability, see comment on 24:2, 10.

³⁰²⁹ Contrast Agrippa I (Acts 12:1–3) and Bernice (*War* 2.313).

³⁰³⁰ E.g., Aeschines, *Embassy* 44; *Rhet. Alex.* 19, 1433b.19–23; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.5.10; *Mil.* 2.4; *Quinct.* 1.5; Apuleius, *Apol.* 13, 91.

³⁰³¹ Speakers deployed depictions of background to their advantage (e.g., *Rhet. Her.* 3.6.14; Hermogenes, *Issues* 46.14–17; Apuleius, *De deo Socr.* 174–75). For apologetic autobiography, see Josephus, *Life* (e.g., 336–67); G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985).

³⁰³² E.g., Fronto, *Ad Am.* 1.1.

knowledge,³⁰³³ or one's hearers' knowledge,³⁰³⁴ was common, including for one's character from one's youth.³⁰³⁵ Paul appeals to common knowledge (26:4–5), though allowing that some might prove unwilling to testify (26:5).³⁰³⁶ Paul's description of *strictest* (26:5) may refer to Pharisees' meticulous and careful interpretation.³⁰³⁷

Paul here is intensely devoted to Judaism (26:4), especially the resurrection hope defended by Pharisees (26:5–7; cf. 23:6–8), just as Plato's Socrates believed in the gods more than did those who accused him of denying them (Plato, *Apol.* 35D). Resurrection hope was part of the broader expectation of Judean eschatology, which also included the restoration of Israel's scattered tribes (Ezek 37:12–23).³⁰³⁸ (Although many other sedentary nations also were divided into "tribes,"³⁰³⁹ *our twelve tribes* specifies Israel,³⁰⁴⁰ for which Luke sees a future hope in Luke 22:30.) Earlier, in Luke 2:37, Anna personified the ideal of worshiping *night and day*.

Paul pleads not only for tolerance, but for faith. After confessing his faith in 26:5–7, he begins defending the reliability of its object in 26:8. Gentile hearers found the resurrection doctrine problematic (cf. 17:32; 25:19),³⁰⁴¹ but it should not be *thought* (lit., "judged," as in 26:6, where it is translated *on trial*) *incredible* (lit., "unbelievable") for an omnipotent God (Luke 1:37; 18:27). Paul must address the question of prior

³⁰³³ Isaeus, *Cleon.* 11.36; Lysias, *Or.* 3:27, §98; Aeschines, *Embassy* 14; Plato, *Apol.* 32E; Demosthenes, *Mid.* 1; Cicero, *Verr.* 1.5.15; 2.1.40.103; Philostratus, *Ep. Apoll.* 37; Josephus, *Life* 257–58.

³⁰³⁴ Aeschines, *Tim.* 56, 65, 80, 89; *Embassy* 123; Isaeus, *Pyrr.* 40.

³⁰³⁵ Aeschines, *Embassy* 182; Sallust, *Sp. G. Cotta* 4.

³⁰³⁶ For reluctance to testify, cf., e.g., Isaeus, *Astyph.* 18; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.29; 6.31.5–6.

³⁰³⁷ See Josephus, *War* 1.110; 2.162; *Life* 191; cf. *Ant.* 13.297; Luke's usage in Acts 18:25–26; 22:3; 23:15, 20; 24:22.

³⁰³⁸ See, e.g., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 96–97; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 139–63.

³⁰³⁹ E.g., Rome (Polybius 6.14.7; Valerius Maximus 2.3.9b; 6.3.4; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.4; Suetonius, *Jul.* 13; *Aug.* 56.1; 57.2; 101.2; *Tib.* 3.2); Athens (Lysias, *Or.* 23.2, §166; Aeschines, *Tim.* 33; Aelius Aristides, *Panath.* 382, in 314D), twelve in Persia (Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.2.5; cf. Quintus Curtius 3.3.13).

³⁰⁴⁰ As in e.g., Ezek 47:13; Sir 44:23; *Sib. Or.* 3.249; 11.35–36; 1QM 2.2–3; Philo, *Sobr.* 66; *Flight* 185; *Rewards* 57; 2 *Bar.* 77:2; 78:4; 84:3.

³⁰⁴¹ Given his Roman (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.360) and hellenistic (*Life* 359) education, Agrippa, though Jewish, may have leaned toward mere immortality of the soul, whether temporary, like Stoics (cf. Seneca, *Dial.* 11.9.3; 12.11.7; *Ep. Lucil.* 57.9), or permanent, like Platonists (e.g., Plato, *Phaedo* 64CE; Maximus of Tyre 10.5; Philo, *Creation* 135; Keener, *Mind*, 269–78).

probability³⁰⁴² since ancient argumentation favored that approach,³⁰⁴³ often more than actual witnesses.³⁰⁴⁴ But sometimes writers offered arguments supporting what might otherwise sound improbable.³⁰⁴⁵ *That God raises the dead* (26:8) is clear: Paul himself met the one already so raised (26:15).

As Paul recounts his past role as persecutor in 26:9–11, he both establishes his credibility in testifying for Christ (since it cannot be the result of his original presuppositions)³⁰⁴⁶ and tarnishes the credibility of his accusers (26:10, 12; cf. 22:5).³⁰⁴⁷ Like Paul's present captors, Paul himself once captured others (Acts 26:10).

Paul's *vote* against martyrs at their executions (26:10)³⁰⁴⁸ refers simply to his approval (cf. 8:1; 22:20). Against those who argue that Paul belonged to the Sanhedrin, it consisted mostly of elders from aristocratic Judean (and often priestly) families. The term for *vote* also means "pebble," since voters historically often cast pebbles as votes. But this metonymy often figuratively stood for decisions,³⁰⁴⁹ expressing an opinion,³⁰⁵⁰ or similar figures.³⁰⁵¹ Paul plays on words: as Stephen was being stoned to death, Paul cast his own pebble.³⁰⁵²

Punishing in synagogues (26:11) was quite public³⁰⁵³ and sometimes experienced by early Christians (2 Cor 11:24; Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11; 21:12).

³⁰⁴² Thus, e.g., Celsus treated resurrection as a priori impossible (Cook, *Interpretation*, 55–61; cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 2.5.27). For dismissing what is "unbelievable," see, e.g., Isaeus, *Cleon.* 22.37; Pliny, *Nat.* 25.5.13–14; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.82.

³⁰⁴³ E.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 7, 1428a.19–23; 9, 1430a.14–21, 26–27; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.15.17, 1376a; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 11.34.1–6; Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 5. On Refutation and Confirmation, 11; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.5.142–43, 146; 3.15.167; 4.12.202; 4.14.211.

³⁰⁴⁴ See, e.g., Demosthenes, *Fals. leg.* 120; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 3.5.142; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 20–21.

³⁰⁴⁵ E.g., Thucydides 2.35.2–3; *Rhet. Alex.* 30, 1438b.2–4; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.12.202–203.

³⁰⁴⁶ On the value of witnesses contrary to expectation, see Heath, "Invention," 91; cf. *Rhet. Alex.* 15, 1431b.37–41.

³⁰⁴⁷ Rome prohibited local leaders from undertaking executions (26:10) unapproved by Rome. One could excuse one's past misbehavior based on youth (*Rhet. Alex.* 7, 1428b.37–40; cf. Acts 7:58) or as simply carrying out orders (Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.14–15). On the rhetorical device of reversing charges, see comment on 24:19, though in Greek Paul's first-person usage in 26:9 is emphatic.

³⁰⁴⁸ Cf. 22:4; but if it involves only Stephen, it could be a generalizing plural, as is perhaps *foreign cities* in 26:11 (probably meaning esp. Damascus; 9:2; 22:5; 26:12).

³⁰⁴⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 11; the Latin equivalent in Pliny, *Ep.* 1.2.5.

³⁰⁵⁰ Aelius Aristides, *Def. Or.* 1, 1D; Lucian, *Harm.* 3; Libanius, *Invective* 6.1; Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.96.

³⁰⁵¹ E.g., Xenophon, *Symp.* 5.8; Musonius Rufus frg. 38, p. 136.4–5; Maximus of Tyre 16.3–4; 33.1; Libanius, *Encomium* 3.19; *Speech in Character* 6.1; 23.7.

³⁰⁵² Others in antiquity used this wordplay (Hipponax frg. 89; Lucian, *Fisherman* 11).

³⁰⁵³ Esp. beatings (*m. Mak.* 3:12–13; *Sipre Deut.* 286.4.1; 286.5.1).

Paul tried to force them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11); in the name of opposing blasphemy (cf. 6:11), Paul was sponsoring it!³⁰⁵⁴ The term translated *furi-ously enraged* (26:11) implies “mad/insane with rage”; Festus unfortunately will soon protest that Paul remains insane as a Christian (26:24)!

The *commission of the chief priests* (26:12) contrasts with Paul’s subsequent commission from Christ (26:16; cf. Gal 1:1, 10);³⁰⁵⁵ it may involve a generalizing plural (cf. Acts 9:1), though Caiaphas’s family often worked in concert (cf. 4:6). Travelers reserved travel *at midday* (26:13) for only the most urgent of missions (see comment on 8:26; 10:9; 22:6). Yet this *light from heaven* (26:13; cf. 9:3; 22:6) was supernaturally³⁰⁵⁶ *brighter than the midday sun*; no heatstroke hallucination, it was experienced also by Paul’s *companions*. They also all fell to the ground (more specific than in 9:4; 22:7), consistent with other reported responses to divine or angelic revelations.³⁰⁵⁷ Judeans treated *Hebrew* as a sacred language, thus appropriate to revelations, although the form of *Saul* here may suggest Aramaic (long the dominant Judean tongue; Neh 8:8).

*Kick against the goads*³⁰⁵⁸ uses a widespread Greek proverb for the mad futility of opposing deity,³⁰⁵⁹ most famous from Euripides’s *Bacchae* 794–95. Significantly, this text in Euripides (along with cognate verbs in *Bacch.* 45, 325, 1255) provides the ultimate literary source for Luke’s use of *theomachos, fighting against God*, in Acts 5:39.³⁰⁶⁰ Since Luke presents

³⁰⁵⁴ The language does not indicate his degree of success (cf., e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 12.253–255; *War* 7.418–19). Jews used similar language of *force* for their own repressors (1 Macc 2:25; 2 Macc 6:1, 7, 18; 7:1; 4 Macc 4:26; 5:2, 27; 8:2; 18:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.253; 16.2), as did Christians (cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.5–6; Tertullian, *Apol.* 2.10).

³⁰⁵⁵ For an agent acting on a sender’s authority, see, e.g., Diodorus Siculus 40.1.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.88.2; Josephus, *Life* 65; *Ant.* 18.1, 265; *m. Ber.* 5:5; *t. Ta’an.* 3:2.

³⁰⁵⁶ Cf. Philo, *Dreams* 1.72; 1 *En.* 14:18–20; 106:5; 2 *En.* 1:5; 19:1; 66:7; 3 *En.* 5:3; 48:9; 53:6; *LAB* 12:1.

³⁰⁵⁷ E.g., Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; 44:4; Dan 8:17–18; 10:9; 1 *En.* 14:13–14; 60:3; 71:2, 11; 4 Macc 4:11; 4 *Ezra* 4:12; 10:30. For standing afterward, as in Acts 26:16, see Ezek 2:1–2; Dan 8:18; 10:11; 1 *En.* 60:4; 71:3; Matt 17:7; Rev 1:17.

³⁰⁵⁸ Prods for directing animals; rebellious donkeys kicked hard and painfully (Babrius 122.11–12). For figurative uses, see, e.g., Philo, *Prelim. St.* 74, 158; the idea in Isa 1:3; *Ps. Sol.* 16:3–4.

³⁰⁵⁹ Scholars cite, e.g., Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.94–95; Aeschylus, *Prom.* 323–25; Ag. 1624; Terence, *Phormio* 1.2.27–28; Plautus, *Truculentus* 4.741.

³⁰⁶⁰ Whether Luke knew Euripides directly or through an anthology. Euripides was one of the most excerpted poets in gnomologies at the primary level (O. Padilla, “Hellenistic παιδεία and Luke’s Education: A Critique of Recent Approaches,” *NTS* 55 (4, 2009): 416–37 [430]), but the play itself was widely known (cf. J. Schäfer, “Zur Funktion der Dionysosmysterien in der Apostelgeschichte. Eine intertextuelle Betrachtung der

Jesus's wording in more than one form elsewhere (Luke 24:47–49; Acts 1:4–8), Luke might envision here Paul's explanation to his hearers rather than Jesus's original wording.³⁰⁶¹ In any case, it is appropriate for King Agrippa, given his hellenistic education. Gamaliel warns against fighting God (5:39), and this is precisely what Gamaliel's student Saul has been doing (26:10–11)!

Luke's complementary accounts affirm not only Paul's call indirectly (through Ananias; 9:15) and after his conversion (22:21), but also, as here, during his conversion (26:16–18; cf. Gal 1:13–16).³⁰⁶² Many find echoes of Jer 1:5–8 here (cf. also Acts 9:15; 18:9–10). In Acts 26:18, Paul turns people to light and opens their eyes as in Isa 42:6–7, as a light to nations (the same term as *Gentiles*; 42:6; 49:6; cf. Acts 13:47), following the Messiah's lead (26:23).³⁰⁶³

Paul's commission in 26:16–18 packs concentrated theological language. In Acts, Paul experiences many appearances (26:16; e.g., 18:9–10; 22:18; cf. 2 Cor 12:1–7) and rescues (Acts 26:17; e.g., 9:29–30; 14:19–20; 19:30–31; cf. 2 Cor 1:10). Satan's *power* (lit., “authority”; Acts 26:18) may imply Satan's dominion over humanity (Luke 4:6; cf. 1QM 17.5–6; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 1 John 5:19); God's kingdom authority overpowers that of Satan (e.g., Luke 4:36; 9:1; 10:19; 11:18–20). *Place among . . . sanctified* (Acts 26:18) means something similar to *inheritance among . . . sanctified* in 20:32; it was OT language for God's people, into which some gentiles (26:17) are now grafted.

Paul obeys the commission of 26:16–18 in 26:19–20, adding to Acts' earlier depiction Paul's preaching in *the countryside of Judea* (26:20), so that Paul himself exemplifies much of the vision of 1:8. One argument in ancient rhetoric was the argument from necessity, especially divine commands (see comment on 11:17). Ancient moralists insisted on behavior

Berufungs- und Befreiungserzählungen in der Apostelgeschichte und der Bakchen des Euripides,” *TZ* 66 [3, 2010]: 199–222).

³⁰⁶¹ B. W. Longenecker, *Paul*, 100; Witherington, *Acts*, 311, 743 n. 487. The biblically literate might think of kicking against God in 1 Sam 2:29; Deut 32:15.

³⁰⁶² Writers could telescope events, simplifying by condensing details (cf., e.g., Laistner, *Historians*, 58–59; Pelling, *Texts*, 45; Licona, *Differences*, 52, 108), but Paul seems to have experienced his call and conversion together (Gal 1:15–16).

³⁰⁶³ In Isaiah's context, cf. Spirit-empowered witnesses in 43:10, 12 and 44:8 as background for Acts 1:8. For correspondences with Paul's self-understanding in his letters, see, e.g., Kim, *New Perspective*, 101–2; Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 47–50. For vision of God and spiritual light, see Keener, *Acts*, 4:3520–26. The contrast between moral light and darkness was common, esp. in the Qumran scrolls (e.g., 1QS 3.3, 19, 25; 1QM 1.1, 11; 13.5, 15; 14.17) and in the NT, including Paul (Rom 13:12–13; 2 Cor 4:6; 6:14; 1 Thess 5:5). For standing evoking Ezek 2:1, see D. C. Allison, “Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel,” *JBL* 135 (4, 2016): 807–26.

consistent with speech, so would not find objectionable Paul's preaching *deeds consistent with repentance* (26:20; cf. Luke 3:8). Yet his opponents *seized . . . and tried to kill him* for such preaching (Acts 26:21). Paul is guilty only of obeying God, whereas his adversaries are guilty of attempted murder (for reversing charges, see comment on 24:19)!

Nevertheless, Paul survived because he *had help from God* (26:22), at least in the case of 26:21 through Roman intervention (21:32–33; 23:27). *Small and great* (26:22; cf. 8:10) was a standard OT and early Jewish idiom for “all”; at the present moment he is *testifying to the great* (26:22). His appeal to *the prophets and Moses* (26:22–23; cf. 3:18, 21; 28:23; Luke 24:27, 44) evokes proofs Luke elucidates in earlier speeches (e.g., Acts 2:24–35; 7:35–37; 13:33–37). Christ is the *first* servant to *proclaim light* to the gentiles (26:23; cf. Luke 2:32; 4:18–19) but is also paradigmatic for those who follow him (Acts 26:17–18; cf. 13:47).

The case against Paul thus is a matter not of Roman law, but of religious disagreement, especially over the resurrection hope (26:23; cf. 23:6; 26:8) rooted in Israel's Scriptures (26:22; cf. 26:6–7). Although Festus lacks the framework for understanding Paul's message (26:24), Agrippa understands the issues: preaching the same message to gentiles as to Jews (26:20) and welcoming both among God's set-apart people (26:18) dramatically challenges rising Judean nationalism.

26:24–29: PROPHETIC VERSUS MANIC INSPIRATION

Unintimidated, Paul answers wit with wit, a socially honorable person (despite chains) among other educated persons of status. Narrators often used speech interruptions (e.g., 22:21–22), such as Festus's interruption in 26:24. In one history, for example, after a bystander interrupts a defense speech, the speaker concludes with final words (Quintus Curtius 6.10.36–37). Nevertheless, magistrates and others often interrupted forensic speech with questions.³⁰⁶⁴ Paul's biblically grounded announcement of resurrection (Acts 26:22–23) seems madness to Festus (26:24; cf. 25:19), probably especially because Paul acts on his visions of Jesus (26:8, 13–20).³⁰⁶⁵

³⁰⁶⁴ Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.25–26; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.30.623; Apuleius, *Apol.* 61; Crook, *Advocacy*, 66–67.

³⁰⁶⁵ Perhaps more manic than mad. For charges of madness in forensic rhetoric, see, e.g., Ps.-Sallust, *Invective Against Marcus Tullius* 1; Apuleius, *Apol.* 52–53 (contrast the insanity defense, Hermogenes, *Issues* 58.19–59.3); more important here, persecutors' charges against martyrs (4 Macc 8:5; 10:13; cf. Wisd 5:4).

A Closer Look: Positive Madness

Gentiles envisioned divine possession as inspiring madness (26:24) or prophetic inspiration (cf. 26:14–19, 27).³⁰⁶⁶ Earlier in Acts those inspired by the Spirit were thought drunk (2:13), requiring Peter's rebuttal (2:15); early Christian inspiration by the Spirit sometimes appeared to outsiders as madness (1 Cor 14:23; 2 Cor 5:13), as was typical for prophetic ecstasy;³⁰⁶⁷ so also speaking divine truth in Acts 12:15.

The masses considered some sages mad,³⁰⁶⁸ but some philosophers considered the masses insane.³⁰⁶⁹ Dio Chrysostom accuses of madness those who pursue entertainment like a narcotic (*Or.* 32.41) or sexual immorality (32.91). Philosophic "madness," in the eyes of the masses, could be compared with the "madness" of inspiration (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.4). ****

Festus may envision here the insanity of inspiration and probably philosophy (given Paul's *learning*, 26:24);³⁰⁷⁰ Luke would lay emphasis on the inspiration and philosophy, though correcting the verdict with Paul's sobriety in 26:25. Because Festus's term for *learning* often connotes documents, Festus might envision Paul's excessive exegesis in the prophets (26:22), thus explaining Paul's subsequent appeal to Agrippa, to whom his speech is particularly addressed, to attest the content of the prophets (26:27).

Although Paul is both educated and inspired, he reframes Festus's claim. Luke elsewhere uses the verb translated *I am speaking* (26:25) for inspired speech (2:4; possibly also 2:14), which outsiders construe as drunkenness (2:13). What Paul speaks, however, is *sober truth* (26:25); ancient sources often contrast sobriety with madness, and philosophers emphasized such sobriety or sound-mindedness.³⁰⁷¹ Others might consider the

³⁰⁶⁶ See C. S. Keener, "Paul's Positive Madness in Acts 26:24–25," pages 311–20 in *Goldene Anfänge und Aufbrüche: Johann Jakob Wettstein und die Apostelgeschichte* (ed. M. Lang and J. Verheyden; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016). Some spoke of the "madness" of inspiration (Proclus, *Poet.* 6.1, K157.25–26; 6.2, 166.20–21; K180.29–30; K181.1–2), a madness that was superior to a "sound mind" (*Poet.* 6.2, K178.24).

³⁰⁶⁷ 2 Kgs 9:11; Jer 29:26; Hos 9:7–8; *Sib. Or.* 1.172.

³⁰⁶⁸ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 6.3.82; 8.36; 9.8; 34.2.

³⁰⁶⁹ E.g., Cicero, *Parad.* 27–32; Musonius Rufus 20, p. 126.2–3; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.12.9; 1.21.4; Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.5b13, pp. 26–27.28–30; 2.7.5b13, p. 28.1–2; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.124.

³⁰⁷⁰ Contrast 4:13. This fits Paul's Lukan persona as a sage (17:22–31; 19:9; 24:24–26); for Paul's letters, cf. Malherbe, *Philosophers*.

³⁰⁷¹ See, e.g., H. F. North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1966); S. Rosen, "Sophrosyne and Selbstbewusstsein," *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1973): 617–42; P. Eisenberg, "Sophrosune, Self, and State: A Partial Defense of Plato," *Apeiron* 9 (2, 1975): 31–36; other sources in Keener, *Acts*, 4:3538–41.

philosophically inclined as divinely maddened and drunk with philosophy, but they viewed themselves as the truly sober (Lucian, *Nigr.* 5–6).

In response to Festus's misunderstanding, Paul invites Agrippa to attest Paul's claims about Jewish matters, the very purpose for which Festus had called for this hearing (25:26–27). Assuming that nothing has escaped the king's notice speaks respectfully to the king concerning what was expected of him,³⁰⁷² and indeed what philosophers expected of the ideal wise person.³⁰⁷³ Paul's appeal to common knowledge (26:26) reflects a standard appeal in forensic rhetoric;³⁰⁷⁴ such appeals to agreed-on knowledge do not require specific proofs (*Rhet. Alex.* pref. 1421a.4–6). Luke elsewhere assumes common knowledge of many events that he reports (Luke 1:4; 24:18).

The phrase *not done in a corner* (26:26) repurposes a common proverb sometimes applied negatively to philosophers who withdrew from public life.³⁰⁷⁵ Rome viewed secretive meetings as subversive,³⁰⁷⁶ and some outsiders criticized monotheistic faiths as attested by only an obscure region.³⁰⁷⁷ But while the secrets of the kingdom were initially revealed to a select group (Luke 8:10; Mark 4:11), all will be revealed (Luke 8:17).

Rhetoricians sometimes shifted from addressing the entire audience to focusing on a particular member (e.g., *Rhet. Her.* 4.15.22), but Paul has been focusing on Agrippa throughout (see esp. 26:2–3, 7, 13, 19), essentially at Festus's invitation (25:26). Agrippa can attest that Paul's revelatory experiences (26:13–18) cohere with those of earlier biblical prophets (26:27), hence are not insanity (26:24). Yet Paul's question as to whether Agrippa believes the prophets implies accepting revelatory witness (such as Paul's, 26:13, 16) and the prophets' testimony to Jesus (26:22; cf. 3:24; 8:32–33; 13:34, 41). In this context, faith (*believe*, 26:27) finds its ultimate object in Jesus (26:18).

Claiming that he knows that Agrippa believes the prophets (26:27) is complimentary (learning being positive, 26:24).³⁰⁷⁸ But Paul is also making

³⁰⁷² Cf. 2 Sam 18:13; 1 Kgs 10:3; Prov 25:2.

³⁰⁷³ Arius Didymus, *Epit.* 2.7.11m, pp. 94–95.16–18.

³⁰⁷⁴ E.g., Aeschines, *Embassy* 14; *Tim.* 44, 55–56, 65, 77–78, 80, 89; Isaeus, *Pyrr.* 40; Cicero, *Verr.* 1.5.15; 2.1.40.103; 2.3.30.71; 2.4.52.117; Apuleius, *Apol.* 28, 59, 76, 94 (to the judge's knowledge in 28, 98–99).

³⁰⁷⁵ Malherbe, *Philosophers*, 155–56, citing esp. Plato, *Gorg.* 485D; Aul. Gel. 10.22.17–24; Themistius, *Or.* 22.265bc. Barrett, *Acts*, 1169, rightly warns that this does not make the figure idiomatic.

³⁰⁷⁶ See A. J. Malherbe, "Not in a Corner: Early Christian Apologetic in Acts 26:26," *SecCent* 5 (4, 1986): 193–210 (203); cf., e.g., Livy 39.15.11; 39.18.9; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.54.

³⁰⁷⁷ Origen, *Cels.* 4.36.

³⁰⁷⁸ This may be especially complimentary in view of some conservatives – even Josephus – thinking Agrippa too "liberal" on some points (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.189–91, 216–18, esp. 218).

the truth of Christ's revelation logically difficult to evade (26:28).³⁰⁷⁹ In 26:28, Agrippa intelligently, publicly, and explicitly evades Paul's logical trap, exposing Paul's not-so-subtle attempt to convert him (per Jesus's instructions, Luke 21:12–13). Agrippa's conversion would have repercussions for Israel's conversion as a whole, a goal of the earliest Christians (cf. Acts 3:19–21), including the historical Paul (Rom 11:13–27).³⁰⁸⁰ Paul's audacity in seeking to convert someone of Agrippa's status may offend (or amuse) Agrippa, but it also makes clear that Paul is no temple desecrator or leader of revolutionaries: he is merely a politically innocuous Nazarene, whose apolitical but evangelical fanaticism has gotten him in trouble with the troublesome Jerusalem priesthood.

"Christian" was not yet a term of endearment (see comment on Acts 11:26). Some understand Agrippa's reply as indicative (e.g., NASB): "In a short [time?] you will persuade me to be a Christian," though Agrippa would find it politically challenging to openly align himself with a minority sect so unpopular with the ruling elite. More, however, read Agrippa's reply as interrogative (e.g., NRSV), based on the context: "Will you persuade me, in so short [a time?], to be a Christian?"

In either case, Agrippa's intent may be ironic. Many argue that "be a Christian" here refers to, "play the part of a Christian."³⁰⁸¹ Others contend that it refers to becoming a Christian. Either way, Agrippa can hardly deny the prophets, but if he answers, "Yes, I believe the prophets," he could be construed by some of his hearers as taking Paul's side. Thus he objects (whether in the form of a question or a statement), "So you want me to act as/become a Christian by agreeing with what you are saying!"³⁰⁸²

Whether because of Paul's (or James's) influence or simply his liberal disposition, Agrippa does show tolerance toward Jesus's movement, even though he does not become a Christian himself. When the high priest Ananus later illegally executes some individuals including James, Agrippa,

³⁰⁷⁹ Those who view this as a *peroratio* can note that this was the place to elaborate and reiterate points in one's favor (Cicero, *De or.* 1.31.143), and ideally to include emotional appeal (cf. R. D. Anderson, *Rhetorical Theory*, 181–82).

³⁰⁸⁰ As Agrippa might know from his sister Drusilla (Acts 24:24), Paul had already sought to convert Felix (24:24–25). For Paul, of course, seeking conversion was not the often modern notion of recruiting more allies to one's "side," but the sharing of the greatest benefit with the recipient.

³⁰⁸¹ Often citing LXX 1 Kgs 20:7 (ET 21:7).

³⁰⁸² *Persuading* (from *peithô*) may echo Paul's use of *peithô* in 26:26 (translated *I am certain*): Paul is persuaded that these matters are public record, but Agrippa is not yet persuaded to become a Christian on that account.

acting in concert with the new governor, removes Ananus from office (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.201–3).³⁰⁸³

What Agrippa may intend as levity, Paul embraces. Consistent with the divine commission he has already announced (26:16–18), Paul gladly admits that he does in fact desire to convert Agrippa and his other hearers (26:29): whether *quickly*,³⁰⁸⁴ as Agrippa jests, or *gradually*,³⁰⁸⁵ and whether to Jews like Agrippa or gentiles like most present (25:23). Paul wants all to *become such as I am* (26:29; cf. Gal 4:12) – i.e., to experience divine light and forgiveness (26:18).

To such becoming, however, Paul adds the caveat,³⁰⁸⁶ *except for these chains* (26:29).³⁰⁸⁷ Chains were humiliating and high-status hearers might recoil at putting themselves in Paul's place.³⁰⁸⁸ Rhetorically, Paul's reference also underlines pathos, arousing pity; thus one speaker "stretched out his hand and let the crowd see it, manacled as he was."³⁰⁸⁹ Such pathos was especially appropriate at the end of a speech.³⁰⁹⁰

26:30–32: ROYAL VERDICT

The combined verdict of Festus, Berenice, and especially Agrippa, a representative of Israel who remained acceptable to Rome even after 70,³⁰⁹¹ strategically concludes Paul's ministry before the voyage to Rome. At worst, Paul might even be insane (26:24), but legally he does not merit

³⁰⁸³ James was not the only individual executed, but he is the only one Josephus specifically names (*Ant.* 20.200), hence was presumably a prominent target.

³⁰⁸⁴ Although disputed, this is probably the phrase's sense in 26:28–29. Some in antiquity doubted the possibility of quick conversions (see Talbert, *Acts*, 209; Malherbe, *Philosophers*, 162).

³⁰⁸⁵ Paul welcomed continued conversation, as in 24:24–25.

³⁰⁸⁶ Such corrections or caveats were conventional rhetorically (*Rhet. Her.* 4.26.36; Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.12.203–204; Rowe, "Style," 141).

³⁰⁸⁷ One need not be lame to be a philosopher, a lame philosopher granted (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.8.14).

³⁰⁸⁸ Although guards could chain legs and even necks (Rapske, *Custody*, 206–7), probably Paul's right wrist was manacled to his guard's left wrist, leaving a (right-handed) guard the advantage in the event of need to use force (Rapske, *Custody*, 31). Chains could even outweigh a prisoner, but typically they were about 10–15 pounds of iron; they could rust on prisoners' sweaty limbs (Rapske, *Custody*, 206–9). In lighter custody, however, they were simply intended to preclude escape (Rapske, *Custody*, 181; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.233).

³⁰⁸⁹ Justin, *Epit.* 14.4.1 (trans. p. 134).

³⁰⁹⁰ E.g., Isaeus, *Menec.* 44, 47; Cicero, *Quinct.* 30.91–31.99; *Pro C. Rabirius* 17.47–48; Quintilian, *Decl.* 267.12–13; 270.25–29; 291.7–8; 298.16; 315.24–25, 322.31; 328.7; 331.14; 338.3; 339.29–32.

³⁰⁹¹ Also *those who had been seated with them* (26:30), the officials of 25:23.

death or imprisonment. In a status-conscious Roman world that executed Jesus and eventually Paul, Luke's depiction of fairer verdicts holds important apologetic value, consistent with his larger narrative (23:29; 25:25; 28:18; Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22, 41, 47).

As in 25:14–22 Luke recounts a scene where neither he nor a reliable source was likely present.³⁰⁹² Given the cover letter that must have accompanied Paul to Rome, however (25:26–27),³⁰⁹³ and Paul's special treatment on the way (27:2–3, 9, 43), that something transpired akin to the events briefly narrated here is a safe inference.

Although the officials recognize that Paul is innocent and do not hand him over to his accusers, neither do they free him. Refusal to cancel the appeal after the conclusion of 26:32 is also a matter of honor and propriety;³⁰⁹⁴ Festus had already publicly decided to refer the case, and it would dishonor both Festus and the emperor not to follow through.³⁰⁹⁵ More importantly but less discreet to explicitly mention in what would become a public document, sending Paul to Rome relieves them of local political constraints. Luke looks beyond such factors to God's plan for Paul (19:21; 23:11; 27:24).

27:1–8: THE VOYAGE BEGINS

Acts 27:1–28:15 narrates Paul's momentous voyage to Rome. Earlier voyages may foreshadow this one for Luke's audience; everyone knew that storms and shipwrecks were frequent, and the widely traveled Paul had experienced some (2 Cor 11:25). Given Luke's space constraints, however, he narrates only one, climactically. It supports Luke's apologetic for Paul's Roman mission: Paul would surely have perished before reaching the imperial court had God not planned for him to testify there (23:11; 27:24).

³⁰⁹² Stricter historians, unlike poets (e.g., Silius Italicus 9.66–177, 340–45), frowned on omniscient narrators (Polybius 2.56.10), but most did reconstruct some private scenes (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 19.78–83; Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.65). Luke offers very few such scenes (Acts 5:34–39; 25:14–22; 26:31–32), basing them on inference from outcomes (5:40; 25:25–27; 27:3).

³⁰⁹³ As part of Paul's case file, it would have been available to Paul and his colleagues; Festus surely mentioned Agrippa's recommendation (see 25:26–27). Since Agrippa remained alive when Luke wrote, radically misrepresenting his opinion (26:32) could have proved counterproductive.

³⁰⁹⁴ On the importance of honor, see, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 5.471–93, 529–32; 8.145–50, 167–71; Isaeus, *Cleon.* 39; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.4.1; 5.11.2; 6.6.4, 9; Suetonius, *Jul.* 11; 19.2.

³⁰⁹⁵ Cf. Sherwin-White, *Society*, 65. At worst, offenses that seriously detracted from the emperor's honor were treasonous (Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 77–78).

Although subsequent detractors might consider Paul's final hearings disastrous, they fit God's plan. Nothing will prevent Paul's destiny to testify before Caesar in Rome (19:21; 23:11; 27:24).

To Paul's recent vindication before Agrippa, Luke now adds divine vindication through storm, shipwreck, and snake bite.³⁰⁹⁶ In the process, his relationship with God preserves many other lives (cf. Gen 50:20). Whatever the ultimate outcome of Paul's hearing before Caesar, Acts' audience must understand that God has vindicated Paul. The primary theological message of this voyage narrative fits the message of the rest of Acts: nothing – whether persecution, division, or natural obstacles – can stop the gospel and God's plan.

Literary artfulness and historical tradition are by no means incompatible; historians who also proved good at recounting their stories were not for that reason any less historians! Sea storms and shipwrecks were common,³⁰⁹⁷ and some common seafarers faced them on multiple occasions (2 Cor 11:25).³⁰⁹⁸ Some scholars even suggest that one-fifth of sea travelers could expect serious danger on their voyages;³⁰⁹⁹ marine archaeology already attests more than a thousand shipwrecks from the ancient Mediterranean.³¹⁰⁰ They thus appear in many genres, including historical reports³¹⁰¹ (sometimes by purportedly eyewitness narrators).³¹⁰² Unlike sea voyages in novels, Acts 27 lacks pirates and a heroine; nor does Paul parallel Jesus in Luke's first volume by stilling the storm

³⁰⁹⁶ Impiety was thought to invite storms and shipwrecks (Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.1.25; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.80; Diogenes Laertius 1.86; Jon 1:8–10). Some used survival at sea as divine attestation of innocence (Ladouceur, "Preconceptions"; Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 175–95); for the range of perspectives, see Talbert, *Acts*, 212–15.

³⁰⁹⁷ Cf. Lucian, *Ship* 7; drownings in Suetonius, *Terence* 5 (one report); *Jul.* 89; *Aug.* 27.4; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.10.494.

³⁰⁹⁸ E.g., Augustus (Suetonius, *Aug.* 8.1; 16.2; 17.3).

³⁰⁹⁹ Toner, *Culture*, 48.

³¹⁰⁰ *OCD*³ 1400; H. Konen, "Shipwrecks, Exploration of," *BNP* 13:392–403. Shipwreck epitaphs even constituted a specific category of epigrams (see M. M. Di Nino, "Posidippus' Shipwrecks," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 21 [1, 2006]: 99–104).

³¹⁰¹ Justin, *Epit.* 16.3.10; 23.3.12; Velleius Paterculus 2.79.3–4; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.18, 46; Suetonius, *Jul.* 25.2; *Claud.* 17.2; *Nero* 40.3; Josephus, *War* 3.425, 530; also nine sources in Johnson, *Acts*, 451; further sources in Schnabel, "Fads," 254–55, following M. Reiser, "Von Caesarea nach Malta: Literarischer Charakter und historische Glaubwürdigkeit von Act 27," pages 49–74 in *Das Ende des Paulus: Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte* (ed. F. W. Horn; BZNW 106; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 53–61.

³¹⁰² Josephus, *Life* 14–15; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.1–2; Lucian, *Peregr.* 43 (a storm).

(Luke 8:25). Some literary features, however, were conventional in various genres.³¹⁰³

Luke provides copious details here, such as the names of the centurion, cohort, and Paul's associates (27:1–2); less widely known toponyms (Cnidus, Salmone, Cauda; 27:7, 16); nautical terminology presumably overheard from sailors aboard; and numbers (27:37).³¹⁰⁴ These details are not only specific but, wherever we can test them (especially regarding weather conditions, locations, distances, and other information gathered from sailors on such a voyage) accurate.³¹⁰⁵ An oft-cited Mediterranean mariner who traced Paul's voyage under similar conditions shows that this account is not simply imagination; only a participant would get correct the right number of days to the right locations, and so forth.³¹⁰⁶ Classicist Arthur Darby Nock regarded this passage "as an authentic transcript of the recollections of an eyewitness, with the confusion and coloring which so easily attach themselves to recollections."³¹⁰⁷

The beginning of Paul's voyage (27:1–4) portends what will come, both in terms of hospitality (27:3; cf. 28:7, 10, 14–15) and in terms of hostile weather (27:4, 7–8). When arrangements are ready (apparently after some delay; cf. 27:9), Paul is assigned to Julius the centurion (27:1), introduced here because of his significance in the following scenes (he also recalls positive centurions in 10:1; 22:25–26; 23:17; 24:23; Luke 7:2–10; 23:47), supporting Luke's apologetic that Rome's agents respected Christ and his agents.

"We" (27:1) includes the narrator; although he has not participated in the narrative's direct corporate action since 21:18, it is incredible to suppose that he left Judea and simply returned, after possibly two years (24:27), just

³¹⁰³ See esp. Praeder, "Acts 27:1–28:16" (note esp. 693–95); Johnson, *Acts*, 450. Such models influenced all genres, "from navigators' notes to pure fiction" (Pervo, *Profit*, 51).

³¹⁰⁴ Dunn, *Acts*, 335.

³¹⁰⁵ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 329. On Luke's details and their correspondence with extrinsic sources, see especially and more recently C. Reynier, *Paul de Tarse en Méditerranée* (LD 206; Paris: Cerf, 2006), an important work (also noting the emphasis that Acts' structure gives to this final voyage).

³¹⁰⁶ J. Smith, *Voyage*; cf. also weather details in R. W. White, "A Meteorological Appraisal of Acts 27:5–26," *ExpT* 113 (12, 2002): 403–7. Few scholars accept the complicated solution that Luke simply interpolated his Pauline material into a genuine but largely non-Pauline story; see R. P. C. Hanson, "The Journey of Paul and the Journey of Nikias: An Experiment in Comparative Historiography," *SE* 4 (1968): 315–18 (318–19); Porter, *Paul in Acts*, 26; Witherington, *Acts*, 757–58; Barrett, *Acts*, 1178–80.

³¹⁰⁷ Nock, *Essays*, 823.

in time for Paul's voyage to Rome.³¹⁰⁸ That Paul's companions³¹⁰⁹ are able to travel with him suggests that he has special favor,³¹¹⁰ as in 24:23, probably because of his anticipated legal exoneration (26:32). This circumstance and Paul's Roman citizenship helps explain Julius's special treatment of Paul (e.g., 27:3).

The title *Augustan Cohort* (27:1) is not unusual; entire legions bore the title of "Augustus."³¹¹¹ Some units with this name existed in this region around this time.³¹¹² Depending on the number of prisoners (27:1) being transported, Julius may have roughly ten soldiers (cf. 27:31–32, 42; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.27). They disembarked from Caesarea's famous artificial harbor.³¹¹³ They found passage on a cargo ship the home port of which was Adramyttium's noteworthy artificial one (Strabo 13.1.65–66), second in its region only to that of Troas (Strabo 13.1.2–4, 51).³¹¹⁴ This smaller ship, which would tediously hug the coast, would carry them north toward Asia Minor, where they could find a larger ship headed west (27:3). Sidon (27:3) had a good harbor (Strabo 16.2.22) and was a day's sailing, as here, under good conditions. The presence of believers in Sidon shows the blossoming of God's purpose for that city (Luke 4:26; 6:17; 10:13–14).

Because unloading and loading cargo consumed considerable time, passengers normally went ashore during such freight movements. Although lower-status prisoners (destined for execution in Rome) would be kept in custody, Julius treats Paul *kindly* (27:3). Because ships transported cargos and only incidentally carried passengers, they did not provide services. Passengers brought their own food and slept on deck in the open on deck or in tents,³¹¹⁵ though a wooden tank in the ship's hold

³¹⁰⁸ Pace Hengel, "Geography," 77–78. Whether Jewish or gentile, the narrator would find Christian community in Caesarea.

³¹⁰⁹ The "we" here might include more than Paul, the narrator, and Aristarchus (27:2); early sources place both Tychicus and Timothy with Paul in (probably) Rome (Eph 6:21; Phil 1:1; 2:19; Col 1:1; 4:7), though they could have joined him later.

³¹¹⁰ People of status sometimes brought servants (Casson, *Mariners*, 193), though even this was sometimes refused (Pliny, *Ep.* 3.16.8–9). They might be permitted as potential witnesses for the defense, provided it did not cost the state (cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 6.5.1–2).

³¹¹¹ See J. B. Campbell, "Legio," *BNP* 7:356–70 (363, 366); Y. Le Bohec, "Ensigns," *BNP* 4:992–97 (993–94); for auxiliary units, see J. B. Campbell, "Auxilia."

³¹¹² Commentators cite *OGIS* 421; esp. *ILS* 1.2683; *CIL* 3.6687.

³¹¹³ On which, including the blocks over fifty tons, see McRay, *Archaeology*, 140.

³¹¹⁴ Cf. Hemer, "Troas," 92; S. Mitchell, "Archaeology," 142–43; Schnabel, *Mission*, 1147.

³¹¹⁵ Casson, *Mariners*, 192–93. Most slept on deck (Libanius, *Maxim* 1.13; 2.8) but apparently some in the hold (1.13).

provided water.³¹¹⁶ Officers like Julius would requisition transport and food for their party;³¹¹⁷ because abuses generated ill-will,³¹¹⁸ Julius is undoubtedly pleased where friends voluntarily supplied needs instead (as in 27:3; 28:14). Recognizing that members of Jesus's movement appear hospitable to Paul in many locations (also 28:15) will bolster Julius's impression of Paul's status in the movement – and that they were not ashamed of his chains (cf. 2 Tim 1:16). On Luke's narrative apologetic level, they function as character witnesses for Paul.

Winds being *against us* (27:4) means that the autumnal northwesterly winds hindered the ship's progress northwestward from Syria;³¹¹⁹ ancient ships' square rigs made sailing into the winds very difficult.³¹²⁰ Instead of sailing northwest across open sea to Myra (27:5), they had to remain east of Cyprus (27:4), shielded by the island from the wind until sailing north, and then west, along the Cilician and then Lycian coasts of Asia Minor (27:5).³¹²¹ Alexandrian grain ships often stopped at Myra's port, Andriace (Strabo 14.3.7).³¹²² In Lycia, Myra's prominence was second only to Patara (cf. Acts 21:1; Strabo 14.3.6).

A Closer Look: Alexandrian Grain Ships (27:6; 28:11)

Rome may have imported as much as 200,000–400,000 tons of wheat every year,³¹²³ ensuring stability (limited grain provoked riots).³¹²⁴ Romans usually bought their bread in the form of loaves that were flat and round.³¹²⁵ Egypt

³¹¹⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 193; L. and R. A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 188.

³¹¹⁷ Rapske, *Custody*, 272–73; *NewDocs* 7, §4, pp. 58–92.

³¹¹⁸ Justin, *Epit.* 38.10.8; Livy 43.7.11; 43.8.1–10; Apuleius, *Metam.* 9.39; Herodian 2.3.4; 2.5.1; R. K. Sherck, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 89, 136 (citing *P. Lond.* 3.1171; *IGLS* 5.1998; *P.S.I.* 446).

³¹¹⁹ Rapske, "Travel and Shipwreck," 35. Many commentators mention "summer" winds here, but it is quite late in the season, since delays due to the winds have them leaving Crete in September or October (perhaps past Oct. 5; see comment on Acts 27:9).

³¹²⁰ Casson, *Mariners*, 196.

³¹²¹ Still, this was roughly the normal route even for Alexandrian ships (Casson, *Mariners*, 208).

³¹²² See Ramsay, "Roads and Travel," 380; *OCD*³ 1016; M. Zimmermann, "Myra," *BNP* 9:412–13; esp. Fant and Reddish, *Sites*, 254–59.

³¹²³ Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 84; for lower estimates, see P. Garnsey, "Grain for Rome," pages 118–30 in *Trade in the Ancient Economy* (ed. P. Garnsey, K. Hopkins, and C. R. Whittaker; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 118; Casson, *Mariners*, 207; idem, *Travel*, 129.

³¹²⁴ E.g., Appian, *Bell. civ.* 5.8.67; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.13; 12.43; Stambaugh, *City*, 143.

³¹²⁵ Stambaugh, *City*, 146 (citing Pliny, *Nat.* 19.53).

paid particularly heavy tribute (Strabo 17.1.12), an unfortunate penalty for its fertility;³¹²⁶ it supplied perhaps one-third of the grain eaten in Rome (–Josephus, *War* 2.386).³¹²⁷

In this period private shipowners speculated in Alexandrian grain.³¹²⁸ Greeks, Phoenicians, and Syrians owned and ran nearly all mercantile ships, including Alexandrian grain ships; Rome merely provided the organization that kept the grain fleet efficient.³¹²⁹

Good weather usually allowed the voyage from Rome to Alexandria in ten to thirteen days, but in worse weather it might take up to three weeks.³¹³⁰ By contrast, prevailing winds made the voyage from Alexandria to Rome (as here) more difficult, in rough weather requiring forty-five days³¹³¹ or more.^{3132 ****}

In 27:7, the vessel makes slow westward progress against the northwest wind, probably leaving port at an opportune break between the several-day storms typical of this season.³¹³³ Cnidus³¹³⁴ lay on a peninsula in southwestern Asia Minor, near Cos, though many of its people lived on a high island (Strabo 14.2.15). Cnidus's harbors (esp. the eastern one) were significant (Strabo 14.2.15; Pliny, *N. H.* 2.112.245). Because of northwest winds and leaving the Anatolian coast, the ship now tacks southwest toward Crete. The voyage from Cnidus to Salmone, on Crete's northeast tip, would take two to three days. Normally ships during this season then sailed along Crete's southern coast, which offered more harbors and some shelter from the northern wind.³¹³⁵

Ancient sources attest *Lasea* and, 1.25 miles (2 km) to its east, the small bay of *Fair Havens* (27:8). Nevertheless, such sites were not widely known, and Luke would not have invented the voyagers' sojourn there.³¹³⁶

³¹²⁶ For the Egypt–Rome grain trade in the Empire, see M. P. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* (2nd rev. ed.; New York: Cooper Square, 1970), 16–34; Garnsey, “Grain for Rome,” 120.

³¹²⁷ N. Lewis, *Life*, 165.

³¹²⁸ Rapske, “Travel,” 26; Stambaugh, *City*, 145; on grain ships, see also P. Seul, *Rettung für alle: Die Romreise des Paulus nach Apg 27,1–28, 16* (BBB 146; Berlin: Philo, 2003), 46–49.

³¹²⁹ Casson, *Mariners*, 212.

³¹³⁰ Rapske, “Travel,” 35–36; Casson, *Travel*, 151–52; idem, *Mariners*, 207.

³¹³¹ Riesner, *Early Period*, 315; Casson, *Mariners*, 208.

³¹³² Ramsay, “Roads and Travel,” 381; Casson, *Travel*, 151–52.

³¹³³ White, “Meteorological Appraisal,” 404. Mark Wilson (personal correspondence, Nov. 25, 2011) estimates that Cnidus is 130 miles (210 km) past Myra.

³¹³⁴ A “free city” under Rome (Strabo 14.1.15; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.29.104).

³¹³⁵ Casson, *Mariners*, 208, 211; cf. Lucian *Ship* 9.

³¹³⁶ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 136; Riesner, *Early Period*, 224.

27:9–13: IGNORING PAUL'S WARNING

Most winter travel (27:9) could be difficult and dangerous, especially by sea.³¹³⁷ With exceptions (see comment on 27:12), most thus avoided travel by sea during the winter,³¹³⁸ and ships usually wintered somewhere (cf. 27:12).³¹³⁹ A severe winter could detain some grain ships bound for Rome, leading to unrest in the capital (Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.38). Roughly May 27 to September 14 was the safest season, with March 10 to May 26 and September 14 through November 11 being risky; and November 11 through March 10 very dangerous.³¹⁴⁰ April through October was the dominant sailing season.³¹⁴¹

In 59 CE, *the Fast* (the Day of Atonement) fell on October 5;³¹⁴² that Luke does not mention the festival that quickly followed (Lev 23:27, 34) may suggest that they were just past this date. Paul advises against the ship leaving in the current weather conditions (27:10).

Against some commentators, Paul the prisoner could have offered advice (27:10); it is unsurprising, however, that it went unheeded.³¹⁴³ Everyone knew that most prisoners were in no hurry to reach Rome. Important people could chat with the skipper,³¹⁴⁴ but prisoners could be detained in darkness below deck or tied to the ship's crossbeams (3 Macc 4:10). If, however, Agrippa's verdict endorsed Paul's innocence (25:26; 26:31–32),³¹⁴⁵ and Paul was a Roman citizen and had attendants representing a movement that he apparently led, he could easily be near Julius. Luke does not say that the discussion of 27:10–11 was held in private; Paul need

³¹³⁷ E.g., Virgil, *Ciris* 480; *Aen.* 4.309; Cicero, *Fam.* 16.9.1; Longus 2.19, 21; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.11; Josephus, *War* 1.279–80.

³¹³⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.2.1; Livy 38.41.15; Tacitus, *Agr.* 10; Lucian, *Dem.* 35; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.12.14; Josephus, *War* 1.279–80; 2.203; 4.499; Charlesworth, *Trade Routes*, 226 (and sources there). For limitations on travel in antiquity, see, e.g., Liefeld, "Preacher," 11–16.

³¹³⁹ E.g., Livy 38.41.15; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 5.8.76; Josephus, *War* 2.203; 4.499.

³¹⁴⁰ Commentators cite Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris* 4.39; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.47.122; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.81. Of course weather was not always determined by dates (cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 18.56.205).

³¹⁴¹ Casson, *Mariners*, 40.

³¹⁴² Jewett, *Chronology*, 51–52. In 58 CE it would be Sept. 16. For reckoning time by festivals, see Acts 20:6, 16; 1 Cor 16:8.

³¹⁴³ If Paul was chained to the centurion (Rapske, *Custody*, 205), he may have come to such a meeting precisely as a prisoner; but this chaining arrangement is unclear (27:3).

³¹⁴⁴ Casson, *Travel*, 156.

³¹⁴⁵ The letter would be sealed, but Julius would have verbal instructions.

merely have been near Julius and some others. Paul might hold more status (at least on land) than the ship's officers.³¹⁴⁶

Careful pilots sometimes solicited the counsel of others aboard a ship with knowledge of sea travel (Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 14.8);³¹⁴⁷ while probably no one solicited (or even welcomed) Paul's nautical advice, they could have permitted it.³¹⁴⁸ Especially sailors, but also higher-class passengers, could have a say in travel plans.³¹⁴⁹ Sailors sacrificed³¹⁵⁰ and consulted omens before voyages; unfavorable ones could delay voyages.³¹⁵¹ The presence of those favored by deities or fortune was thought to help voyages.³¹⁵² Paul's spiritual prominence provided at least one incentive to heed him – although they did not.

The centurion trusts the counsel of those in charge of the ship more than that of Paul. He will soon discover, however, that God can provide nautical wisdom that even experts lack (as in Luke 5:4–9).³¹⁵³ Although Julius would be among the important voyagers consulted, he merely decides (27:11) whether his entourage will continue with this ship or he will requisition winter quarters for them in Lasea. The decision to sail is made by *the majority* (27:12).

The captain was probably ultimately responsible for the cargo;³¹⁵⁴ if he does not own the boat, he might be more likely to gamble its contents on beating the storm.³¹⁵⁵ The closer the ship got to Rome, the earlier it could deliver its cargo after winter. Seeking to calm Rome's unrest, the previous emperor Claudius promised shipowners to make good any loss due to storms (Suetonius, *Claud.* 18.2) and offered incentives (often including Roman citizenship) for bringing grain to Rome in winter

³¹⁴⁶ Sometimes the captain was a slave (cf. Casson, *Mariners*, 195–96).

³¹⁴⁷ Paul had voyaged thousands of miles (Witherington, *Acts*, 754), and he certainly had sufficient experience with shipwrecks (2 Cor 11:25).

³¹⁴⁸ See Rapske, *Custody*, 377. Paul preferred wintering in secure locations (1 Cor 16:6; cf. 2 Tim 4:21; Tit 3:12).

³¹⁴⁹ Praeder, "Acts 27–28," 691 n. 18.

³¹⁵⁰ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.21.12; Philostratus, *Hrk.* 58.5.

³¹⁵¹ Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.4; Casson, *Travel*, 155 (cf. further 156); W. Hübner, "Weather Portents and Signs," *BNP* 15:603–5. In ancient literature, "forecasts of storm and shipwreck" usually go unheeded and "are followed by storms and/or shipwrecks" (Praeder, "Acts 27–28," 690); there was little reason for reporting them otherwise.

³¹⁵² Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.13; Iamblichus, *V.P.* 3.16; 28.135; *Pesiq. R. Kah.* 18:5.

³¹⁵³ For unheeded historical naval warnings, see, e.g., Polybius 1.37.4–8; Pliny, *Ep.* 6.16.11, 19.

³¹⁵⁴ Cf. *NewDocs* 2, §25, p. 74; *P.Oxy.* 3250; *P. Hibeh* 2.198.5.11–22.

³¹⁵⁵ Renters agreed to return boats undamaged *except* for acts of God (*NewDocs* 6, §12, pp. 82–83).

(*Claud.* 18.3).³¹⁵⁶ Many shipowners in this period thus made such calculated gambles.³¹⁵⁷ Ships normally sailed from Alexandria in April, May, or June, but often faced long administrative delays in Italian ports; ships that could not return to Alexandria before late August might face winter weather if they attempted a second trip, but vessels often gambled by attempting it.

Shipowners' profit, rather than sailors' interests, dictated a second run.³¹⁵⁸ Although most shipowners were of lower status, the urban elite lent them money, hence presumably controlled a large share of profits.³¹⁵⁹ The risk of large losses limited the profitability of such ventures,³¹⁶⁰ but costly loans insured potential losses, allowing for more risks.³¹⁶¹ So urgent was Rome's grain supply that maliciously delaying a grain ship could result in a fine;³¹⁶² likewise, warnings against shipwreck could be taken badly if they harmed commerce.³¹⁶³

The Greek terms for the officers in 27:11 do not fully specify their roles. Normally the *pilot* was the most important (Philo, *Creation* 88) and vigilant (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.64–65) person on the ship. Because a *pilot* was usually the captain, many argue that the term translated *owner of the ship* refers to the shipowner here;³¹⁶⁴ but sometimes the latter term designated the pilot instead.³¹⁶⁵ Owners of fleets and those who bankrolled merchants would not travel with their ships, but inscriptions show that a smaller businessman with only one ship often traveled with it as its captain.³¹⁶⁶ Sometimes a merchant who owned only a single ship did own a massive one (27:37).³¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the Greek term sometimes

³¹⁵⁶ Cf. Cadbury, *Acts in History*, 60; *OCD*³ 1030; cf. Suetonius, *Claud.* 19.

³¹⁵⁷ See Rapske, "Travel," 4–6, 22–29. Earlier, cf. emergencies in Xenophon, *Ages.* 2.31; Nicolaus, *Aug.* 17; Cicero, *Fam.* 13.60.2; *Verr.* 2.2.38.95; Plutarch, *Luc.* 2.2–3; *Caes.* 52.1; Suetonius, *Jul.* 58.2; pirates in Pliny, *Nat.* 2.47.125; Suetonius, *Jul.* 4.

³¹⁵⁸ Casson, *Mariners*, 210–11 (mentioning Paul's ship).

³¹⁵⁹ H. W. Pleket, "Urban Elites and Business in the Greek Part of the Roman Empire," pages 131–44 in Garnsey, Hopkins, and Whittaker, *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, 137–38.

³¹⁶⁰ See MacMullen, *Social Relations*, 100.

³¹⁶¹ See *OCD*³ 924; C. Krampe, "Fenus Nauticum," *BNP* 5:381–82; idem, "Naufragium," *BNP* 9:541–42. For alleged insurance fraud, deliberately wrecking unprofitable ships, cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.32.

³¹⁶² Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 89.

³¹⁶³ Hermogenes, *Issues* 65.17–22 (hypothetical).

³¹⁶⁴ Barrett, *Acts*, 1190. Cf. Lucian, *Alex.* 56.

³¹⁶⁵ Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.16; Johnson, *Acts*, 447.

³¹⁶⁶ Haenchen, *Acts*, 700; Bruce, *Commentary*, 507.

³¹⁶⁷ E.g., Lucian, *Ship* 14. *Naukleroi* often united to share risks (W. Schmitz, "Naukleros," *BNP* 9:542).

refers to the cargo carrier rather than the ship's owner.³¹⁶⁸ Moreover, actual shipowners were slaveholders who often "owned" not only the ship, but the crew and pilot as well.³¹⁶⁹ Crew on Alexandrian grain ships could be Greeks, Syrians, or Phoenicians,³¹⁷⁰ but also often Egyptians.³¹⁷¹

Nearby islands helped shelter Fair Havens' places for ships from harsh winds,³¹⁷² but a better winter harbor with a larger population, such as Phoenix some 50 miles further, seemed preferable (27:12).³¹⁷³ Some 6 miles (10 km) beyond Fair Havens lies Cape Matala, after which Crete's southern coast turns sharply north, offering little protection against a north-wester.³¹⁷⁴ Thus if they are going to sail, they need to quickly seize this apparent window of opportunity.

Unfortunately, mountains over 1,000 meters high and only a kilometer or two from Fair Havens obstructed their vision to the north and east.³¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, winds shifted every few days, so a fairly constant "bubble" of pleasant weather often lay directly south of a storm route.³¹⁷⁶ On most occasions, their gamble would have succeeded, but over the course of time some such gambles were bound to be fatal.

27:14–20: DISASTER AT SEA

A *south wind* (27:13; cf. 28:13) would help them stay *close to shore* as they rounded Cape Matala, 4 miles to the west. Then, however, they probably attempted a west-northwest shortcut across the bay of Mesará, for a 34–36

³¹⁶⁸ See Schmitz, "Naukleros." *Navicularii* (the Latin term) often traded at ports (Bauckham, *Climax*, 373). Plutarch, *Statecraft* 13, *Mor.* 807b; Josephus, *Ant.* 9.209, often cited for shipowners, are not clear to this effect. Cf. Libanius, *Anecdote* 3.24. Real shipowners could fear trusting all their goods to the fate of a single ship (Hesiod, *W.D.* 689–91).

³¹⁶⁹ Casson, *Mariners*, 195–96 (esp. the captain and mates, since other crewmembers could be rented). Given managerial roles for many ancient slaves, a slave pilot could still oversee matters.

³¹⁷⁰ Casson, *Mariners*, 212.

³¹⁷¹ Casson, *Mariners*, 188–89; Lucian, *Ship* 2; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.23.

³¹⁷² White, "Meteorological Appraisal," 404–5; Finegan, *Apostles*, 192, 195.

³¹⁷³ For the harbor, see I. F. Sanders, *Roman Crete: An Archaeological Survey and Gazetteer of Late Hellenistic, Roman, and Early Byzantine Crete* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1982), 29; fig. 64. Some argue for the eastern bay near Loutro (J. Smith, *Voyage*, 87–92), but most prefer the western, Phonika Bay (Finegan, *Apostles*, 196–97; Barrett, *Acts*, 1192). In any case, neither Luke nor Paul reached there.

³¹⁷⁴ Bruce, *Commentary*, 504; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 136; see Sanders, *Crete*, 29, and fig. 64.

³¹⁷⁵ White, "Meteorological Appraisal," 405–6.

³¹⁷⁶ White, "Meteorological Appraisal," 406. For calm before storms in various genres, see Praeder, "Acts 27–28," 691.

mile voyage toward Phoenix. En route, no coastline shielded them from northern winds.³¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, south winds in this region can easily shift suddenly to dangerous northeasters (27:14).³¹⁷⁸ Even once the voyagers could see the *northeaster* to their north, they might expect to succeed against it. Local topography here made this *northeaster* distinctive, however: Crete's Platanos Valley funnels harsh winds between two mountain ranges.³¹⁷⁹ Despite some naturalistic explanations,³¹⁸⁰ ancients generally attributed the winds to deities;³¹⁸¹ God uses them in Acts 27:4, 7, 13–15, 40, to provide Paul an opportunity to testify.

In the worst storms, ships *were driven* (27:15). Because ancient ships' mainsails were cut square, facing into a headwind was difficult, often requiring wide tacks.³¹⁸² The northeaster drove them some 20 miles west-southwest of the bay of Mesará, a trajectory that carried them by the small but inhabited³¹⁸³ island of *Cauda* (27:16), not the sort of information someone would have inferred without having been blown there.³¹⁸⁴ They could not secure the ship on the side they were passing, but the brief respite its leeward side provided from the wind gave them momentary opportunity for maneuvers.

Thus they could secure the dinghy (27:16), a small *boat* used for landings or for pulling the ship's head in the right direction during tacking.³¹⁸⁵ Normally the ship would tow its dinghy behind the stern, usually with a sailor in it,³¹⁸⁶ but the harsh storm made this unsafe, and water filling the boat complicated retrieval. The dinghy's mention here prepares the reader for its subsequent role (27:30–32). Luke participates in pulling up the boat and experiences the storm (*we*, 27:16, 18), but only the crew undergirds the ship, lowers gear, or throws weight *overboard* (*they*, 27:17–19).

³¹⁷⁷ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 141.

³¹⁷⁸ Finegan, *Apostles*, 197; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 141; Casson, *Mariners*, 73, 211.

³¹⁷⁹ White, "Meteorological Appraisal," 406–7.

³¹⁸⁰ E.g., Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 5.1.1; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.45.116; Plutarch, *Bride* 12, *Mor.* 139DE; cf. 1 *En.* 18:1–5; 34:2–3; 76:4.

³¹⁸¹ E.g., Valerius Flaccus 8.322–27; angels in 1 *En.* 18:5; *Jub.* 2:2.

³¹⁸² Cary and Haarhoff, *Life*, 135; H. T. Wallinga, "Poseidonios on Beating to Windward (FGH 87F46 and Related Passages)," *Mnemosyne* 53 (4, 2000): 431–47.

³¹⁸³ Sanders, *Crete*, fig. 2 on p. 10; p. 128.

³¹⁸⁴ With Hemer, *Acts in History*, 142. An inscription on *Cauda* confirms its location, but unlike Luke two significant geographers from the period assign its location wrongly (C. Forbes, "The Acts of the Apostles as a Source for Studying Early Christianity," 5–36 in Harding and Nobbs, *World*, 29).

³¹⁸⁵ Casson, *Travel*, 157.

³¹⁸⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 195.

Driven to the southwest at an estimated mile and a half each hour, they feared grounding at low tide³¹⁸⁷ on the Libyan shoals of the greater³¹⁸⁸ Syrtis (27:17); voyagers often feared it.³¹⁸⁹ *Undergird* (27:17) probably refers to using frapping cables to brace the hull,³¹⁹⁰ violent storms could shatter not only spars but even the hull (Pliny, *Nat.* 2.132). *Sea anchor* (27:17) might be the best translation for the Greek term *skeuos* here (used as a drag); others suggest the mainsail or another object.

Emergency conditions sometimes require jettisoning cargo.³¹⁹¹ Alexandrian grain ships were normally full when they set out on their Rome-ward voyage.³¹⁹² Merchants frequently borrowed money to purchase cargoes, then repaid them after selling the cargo; the expensive loans (up to 30 percent of the cost) was forgiven – but only if the ship was destroyed.³¹⁹³ Jettisoning precious cargo is thus a drastic act (cf. *loss* in 27:21), though only part of the cargo is jettisoned here (27:38).³¹⁹⁴ They also discard some equipment (the term translated *tackle* in 27:19 might refer to the tall yard).³¹⁹⁵

Some light penetrated clouds during phases of the storm (27:39), but *sun* and *stars* were obscured (27:20), a situation deemed terrifying (2:20; Isa 13:10; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10; 3:15), including in sea storms (Ovid, *Metam.* 11.520–21). Stars were necessary for navigation³¹⁹⁶ and determining whether they remained at risk of being driven into the Syrtis (27:17). Many counted death at sea as particularly tragic (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 5.21.3); because those who died there could not be buried,³¹⁹⁷ they could not enter

³¹⁸⁷ Polybius 1.39.3–6; Strabo 17.3.20.

³¹⁸⁸ The larger of the two Syrtes, it was massive (Pliny, *Nat.* 5.4.26–27).

³¹⁸⁹ Strabo 17.3.20; Josephus, *War* 2.381. Romans even linked them with the mythical dangers of Scylla and Charybdis (Catullus 64.156; Ps.-Tibullus 3.4.90–92; Ovid, *Am.* 2.16.21–26). This is aside from the monsters supposed to reside there (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 5.6–7, 12–15; Lucian, *Dipsads* 6).

³¹⁹⁰ Cf. Rapske, “Travel,” 35; Apollonius Rhodius 1.367–70.

³¹⁹¹ Aristotle, *N.E.* 3.1.5, 1110a; Polybius 1.39.3–4; Cicero, *Quint. fratr.* 3.8.1; Jon 1:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.377; *War* 1.280; *b. Yoma* 38a, bar.; cf. sources in Praeder, “Acts 27–28,” 691.

³¹⁹² Casson, *Mariners*, 208.

³¹⁹³ *OCD*³ 924; Krampe, “Naufragium,” 541; Toner, *Culture*, 45. The interest rate was not limited (cf. Paulus *Sent.* 2.14.3) until Justinian (*Cod. Iust.* 4.32.26.2; Krampe, “Fenus Nauticum,” 381).

³¹⁹⁴ Larger ships such as this one (27:37) could carry more than 250 tons (*OCD*³ 1400; Casson, *Mariners*, 172, 209; N. Hirschfeld, “The Ship of Saint Paul, Part I: Historical Background,” *BA* 53 (1, 1990): 25–30 [27]).

³¹⁹⁵ Casson, *Travel*, 157; for rigging, see Finegan, *Apostles*, 199.

³¹⁹⁶ One reason for avoiding winter travel (*OCD*³ 1030–31; Casson, *Mariners*, 195).

³¹⁹⁷ E.g., Achilles Tatius 23.3; Propertius, *Eleg.* 3.7.7–26; Libanius, *Comparison* 4.14.

Hades,³¹⁹⁸ hence might wander endlessly above their sites of drowning (Achilles Tattius 5.16.1–2). Suspense increases in the narrative as the situation grows increasingly hopeless (27:20).³¹⁹⁹ This situation provides the context for Paul's assurance of God's intervention (27:21–26).

27:21–26: THE ANGEL'S PROMISE

Some philosophers expected a truly wise person to remain serene during sea storms.³²⁰⁰ Paul offers a different hope. After setting the dramatic stage of deadly peril and others' loss of hope (27:14–20), Luke reports Paul's faith and encouragement stemming from an angelic revelation (27:21–26). We might envision the present scene as above deck or, given the storm and some discarded cargo, below deck and initially heard only by officers or those nearby. Although rhetoric highly valued the ability to project one's voice,³²⁰¹ modern scholars often doubt that Paul could have addressed his companions during a storm.³²⁰² Still, ancient historians regularly depict generals addressing tens of thousands of troops before battle,³²⁰³ though undoubtedly not everyone heard them.³²⁰⁴ Some eighteenth-century orators could preach to tens of thousands.³²⁰⁵

Paul chides his hearers in 27:21,³²⁰⁶ but for their comfort. God's assurance of his hearers' survival in 27:22–24 does not undermine Paul's warning in 27:10; even biblical prophecies were often conditional, taking

³¹⁹⁸ Homer, *Il.* 23.70–74; Virgil, *Aen.* 6.365–66. Earlier, cf. J. H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 178.

³¹⁹⁹ Common in suspenseful sea-voyage narratives (Praeder, "Acts 27–28," 692; Johnson, *Acts*, 448–49).

³²⁰⁰ Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 6.32.4; Musonius Rufus 8, p. 66.10; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.5.12; 2.19.16; Diogenes Laertius 1.86; 2.71; 9.11.68; Aul. Gel. 1.2.11; 19.1.4–6, 11–21; Lucian, *Peregr.* 42–44.

³²⁰¹ Valerius Maximus 8.7. ext. 1; Hall, "Delivery," 220.

³²⁰² Haenchen, *Acts*, 704; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 218; Praeder, "Acts 27–28," 696. Most alleged parallels to storm speeches involve preparation for death (Witherington, *Acts*, 767).

³²⁰³ E.g., Thucydides 2.86.6–2.88.1; 4.9.4–4.11.1; Polybius 15.10; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.6.1–6.9.6; Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.32; *Ann.* 3.46; 14.36; *Agric.* 30–32, 33–34; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 8.7.42; 8.17.116; C.W. 4.16.126; Deut 20:2–8, esp. 20:3–4; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.44–45; E. M. Anson, "The General's Pre-battle Exhortation in Graeco-Roman Warfare," *GR* 57 (2, 2010): 304–18.

³²⁰⁴ Cf. Quintus Curtius 4.9.20; 4.13.38; 4.14.7; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.35; Suetonius, *Jul.* 33. Perhaps generals simply rode in front of the army, delivering more concise exhortations (Marincola, "Speeches," 128).

³²⁰⁵ Noll, *History*, 93; cf. also more recently Charles Spurgeon or Aimee Semple McPherson, though in more acoustically designed settings.

³²⁰⁶ Cf. Luke's use of the Greek interjection *ô* here and in 13:10; 18:14; Luke 9:41; 24:25; cf. Rom 2:1, 3; 9:20; Gal 3:1.

account of repentance (Jer 18:7–10; Jon 3:10) or prayer (Exod 32:10–14; Job 42:8), though this was not guaranteed (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; Ezek 14:20). The cargo (Acts 27:18, 38) and ship (27:41–44) are ultimately lost just as Paul warns, but Paul's instructions (27:26, 31–34) and probably his intercession (cf. 27:23–24) ultimately save his fellow voyagers' lives,³²⁰⁷ which matter more than possessions (cf. Luke 8:32–39; 12:23; 17:31).

Angelic revelations (27:23) are common in Luke-Acts (1:10–11; 8:26; 10:3; Luke 1:11–20, 26–38; 2:9–15; 24:4–7, 23), as in the OT (e.g., Gen 31:11; 1 Kgs 19:5; Zech 4:1),³²⁰⁸ as is the superhuman encouragement not to fear (Luke 1:13, 30; Acts 18:9, 27:24), which Paul passes on to his hearers (27:22, 25). Most of Paul's gentile hearers would have accepted the idea of divine messengers.³²⁰⁹

Paul's mission *before the emperor* (27:24)³²¹⁰ means before Caesar's tribunal; by Nero's day, most of this case load was delegated.³²¹¹ Luke reemphasizes here that Paul's appeal for tolerance is God's plan, whatever the short-term outcome; this apologetic approach ultimately proved effective, though it took centuries longer than Luke perhaps anticipated. Paul expresses *faith* (27:25), trusting that matters would turn out as God had spoken (like Mary in Luke 1:45). An island (27:26) was sometimes a storm-tossed ship's final hope (27:39; cf., e.g., Apollodorus, *Bib.* 1.9.26).

27:27–38: PAUL'S LEADERSHIP APPROACHING LAND

Throughout the narrative Paul's influence has increased, until now the soldiers (27:31–32) and passengers (27:34–36) are heeding him. Given a strong northeast wind and the ship's attempt to tack starboard, fourteen days (27:27) is roughly the time needed to reach Koura from Cauda.³²¹² *The sea of Adria* (27:27) includes what we call the Adriatic today, but extends much further south.³²¹³

³²⁰⁷ Contrast Jonah's endangering gentile voyagers in Jon 1:6–10.

³²⁰⁸ In early Judaism, see, e.g., 1 *En.* 1:2; 74:2; 3 *Bar.* 1:8; 4 *Bar.* 6:15; *T. Reub.* 5:3; *T. Jud.* 15:5; a night vision in *Jub.* 32:21; 4Q537 f1+2+3:0.

³²⁰⁹ Cf., e.g., Homer, *Il.* 2.786–87; 4.121–24; Virgil, *Aen.* 5.618–20; Maximus of Tyre 8.8; 9.2.

³²¹⁰ Ancient auditors expected the fulfillment of divine predictions even when, as here, they occur beyond the narrative itself; see, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 12.15; 23.80–81; *Od.* 23.266–84.

³²¹¹ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 110; O'Rourke, "Law," 177; C. G. Paulus, "Appellatio," *BNP* 1:894–95.

³²¹² Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 335 and other commentators, following J. Smith, *Voyage*.

³²¹³ Rapske, "Travel," 40–41 (citing, e.g., Livy 5.33.7; Strabo 2.5.29; 7.5.9–10); cf. Josephus, *Life* 15. For various definitions, cf. Ptolemy 3.4.1; 3.15.1; Strabo 2.5.20; Paus. 5.25.2–3.

Being awake *about midnight* (27:27; probably estimated from the last visible light through the clouds) implies the situation's intensity (cf. 16:25). They may have detected *land* by hearing breakers battering land over the sound of the wind. If they were on a westward trajectory toward St. Paul's Bay, they would have "passed within a quarter of a mile of the low rocky point of Koura" and "seen the breaking foam."³²¹⁴ If the wind was no longer at gale strength, a ship approaching from the east could have heard the breakers at Point Koura from a mile and a half away.³²¹⁵

Ancient mariners *took soundings* (27:28) by using lead weights, the greased, hollow undersides of which would collect samples from the sea floor.³²¹⁶ Rendering suspect the skepticism of Luke's detractors, Luke's reported soundings fit our known topography of their locations. The point is that "the water was shoaling dangerously fast."³²¹⁷ Without some daylight, they could run aground too far from shore for anyone to see or reach it safely and hence survive. In morning light, they could try (unsuccessfully, 27:41) to reach the bay (27:39). To prevent being driven onto rocks they could not see, they threw out anchors (27:29).³²¹⁸ (Anchors did not, however, always prevent shipwrecks.)³²¹⁹ Ships usually cast anchors from the bow; this was also the usual ancient practice,³²²⁰ but here they cast *from the stern* first to avoid being driven around stern-first and because they needed to drive the ship aground in the morning.³²²¹

The sailors (27:30) have little stake in the ship. Sailors were often slaves,³²²² here they may be simply needy persons trying to make a living. Anchoring *the bow* was a valid procedure, but would not have required many sailors. That many sailors apparently wish to enter the lowered dinghy seems more suspicious. The frightened (27:29) sailors do not trust Paul's assurance (27:22–26) and are not convinced that the

³²¹⁴ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 146.

³²¹⁵ Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 338.

³²¹⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 173, 195, noting Herodotus 2.5 and archaeological remains; cf. Pliny, *N. H.* 2.105.224.

³²¹⁷ Casson, *Mariners*, 211.

³²¹⁸ With, e.g., Casson, *Mariners*, 211.

³²¹⁹ See S. Wachsmann and D. Haldane, "Anchors," *OEANE* 1:137–40 (138).

³²²⁰ Though they were able to cast from the stern (Bruce, *Acts*¹, 463; Appian, *Hist. rom.* 8.18.123).

³²²¹ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 147. The longing for daylight reprises a literary motif (Bruce, *Acts*¹, 463, cites Homer, *Od.* 9.151, 306, 436).

³²²² Casson, *Mariners*, 195–96.

anchors will hold until daybreak;³²²³ moreover, they might be near the shallows of Syrtis (27:17).

Thus they seek to steal away in something like a lifeboat at the only time they could do so undetected.³²²⁴ If they wait for day, conflict over who gets the dinghy will likely ensue,³²²⁵ and the soldiers, being fully armed, will win. Taking turns ferrying 276 passengers (27:37) to shore would require more trips than the boat was likely to survive. Ironically, the boat, which could save only a few, was not necessary to save anyone. God (cf. 27:24) allowed everyone to get to land safely (27:43–44), even those who could not swim (27:44). Only by trusting Paul's divine insight enough to abandon the boat's slim natural hope for a few were the many ultimately saved³²²⁶ by God.

Paul's earlier promise of survival for all (27:22–24) is now seen to be a conditional prophecy, but Paul is continuing to listen to God and is ready for the condition (27:31). By abandoning the ship, the sailors would leave others to drown; only the sailors had the expertise to guide the ship forward in the morning (27:39–41). Once the sailors are forced to remain on board (27:32), the same expertise that would serve the sailors will serve all.

Julius earlier believed the professional mariners over Paul – a mistake he will not repeat here (27:31–32). Julius's favor³²²⁷ hardly makes Paul literally in command of the ship,³²²⁸ he remains vulnerable to abuse as a prisoner (27:42).

The voyagers' fast (27:21, 33) stems not from lack of food (cf. 27:33–36), but rather from seasickness, mortal anxiety (see especially 27:20, 36),

³²²³ See Tannehill, *Acts*, 333. He complains (p. 334) that Haenchen's skepticism on this point creates "a new story more to" his liking.

³²²⁴ J. Smith, *Voyage*, 137, provides modern examples of sailors risking such attempts.

³²²⁵ Cf. the description in Achilles Tatius 3.3.1–4. Cf. Praeder, "Acts 27–28," 701 (emphasizing the few references).

³²²⁶ Luke often uses "saved" or "salvation" language in this context for deliverance from the storm (27:20, 34, 43–44; 28:1, 4; cf. esp. "Unless . . . you cannot be saved" in 27:31, paralleling 15:1); this language was common in deliverances at sea (Diodorus Siculus 4.43.1; 11.24.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 11.9.1; Achilles Tatius 3.5; Libanius, *Comparison* 4.4–5).

³²²⁷ Vespasian gave Josephus expensive gifts even while the latter remained in custody, out of respect for his prophetic gift (Josephus, *War* 3.408). Cf. fear of a divine agent in Gen 20:7–8; favor in captivity in 39:4, 21–22; Dan 1:19–20.

³²²⁸ Though it might leave readers that impression; cf. Lentz, *Luke's Portrait*, 94 (regarding this portrait as fictitious).

or both.³²²⁹ Sea voyage literature offers no parallels for sharing meals (27:33–38); the passage instead evokes other meals in Luke-Acts.³²³⁰ Some contend that Luke styles the meal to evoke the eucharist,³²³¹ especially since the food is for their survival (*sôtêria*, “salvation”) in 27:34. Others respond that wine is missing, and “take,” “break,” and “thank” (27:35; cf. Luke 22:19) characterize thanksgiving at *all* Jewish meals (cf. Luke 9:16; 24:30).³²³² Still, the Lord’s Supper is part of a broader pattern of eating together in Luke-Acts, and this broader pattern in turn affects how we read the Lord’s Supper (cf. 22:17, 19; Acts 27:35). Jesus’s symposia with sinners (Luke 5:29–30; 7:34; 15:2; 19:7) reveal that divine fellowship meals welcome everyone, not just the righteous (Luke 14:13–14, 21–24). Gentiles would understand Paul’s act of thanksgiving (Acts 27:35), since they poured libations to deities at the beginning of banquets.³²³³

That Paul is exhorting the voyagers, whether altogether or in groups, *before daybreak* (27:33) probably suggests voyagers’ anxiety-ridden, sleepless night.³²³⁴ That none of them would die, and that food was necessary for their survival (27:34),³²³⁵ reinforces the interplay between divine sovereignty and human obedience in the rest of the narrative (cf. 27:22–24; 27:31). To promise that not a hair would be lost was a graphic Semitic way of promising survival³²³⁶ (cf., perhaps hyperbolically, Luke 21:18). Paul’s example and his encouragement that none of them would perish encouraged them to eat and cooperate with their promised survival (Acts 27:36). This is Paul’s fourth recorded intervention, and by now *everyone* heeds him (27:36).

³²²⁹ Cf. the later, independent true account of fourteen days’ fast while adrift in Johnson, *Acts*, 455 (citing Aristides). Some passengers may have also run low on food, because of the unexpected length of time without the ship being able to make port.

³²³⁰ Praeder, “Acts 27–28,” 696–97.

³²³¹ See esp. Heil, *Meal Scenes*, 293–305.

³²³² Witherington, *Acts*, 772–73; Dunn, *Acts*, 341. For thanksgiving at meals, see, e.g., *Jub.* 22:6; *Sib. Or.* 4.25–26; Josephus, *War* 2.131; *m. Ber.* 6.1–6; S. Safrai, “Religion in Everyday Life,” pages 793–833 in Safrai and Stern, *Jewish People*, 802–3; recalled in 1 Tim 4:3–5; esp. *Did.* 9.2–3; 10.3.

³²³³ See Harland, *Associations*, 77. Voyagers also customarily sacrificed in gratitude after arriving safely (Casson, *Mariners*, 194) – though Paul is grateful beforehand.

³²³⁴ For anxiety causing sleeplessness, see, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 2.2–3; Aristophanes, *Lys.* 27; Livy 40.56.9; Plutarch, *Cic.* 35.3; *Alex.* 31.4; Ps 102:7.

³²³⁵ For needing food for strength, cf. Homer, *Il.* 19.156–70, 231–33; Polybius 3.71.11–3.72.6; 1 Sam 14:26–31; Mark 8:3.

³²³⁶ 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11; 1 Kgs 1:52; cf. Dan 3:27; 3 Macc 6:6; Matt 10:30; *b. B.B.* 16a.

Some suggest that Luke numbers passengers here (27:37) to evoke numbering before feeding in Luke 9:14. In any case, the number indicates a sizeable ship, though much more massive ones are known.³²³⁷ Seafaring ships typically varied from 800 to 1,500 tons.³²³⁸ Passengers must lighten the ship to prevent its premature grounding on rocks before the shore; wetted grain could even double in volume, further rupturing the hull,³²³⁹ but once grounded the ship would not survive that long. It would have been impossible to discard all the grain aboard in 27:18, and they probably cannot finish all the job here either (27:38). For some ships, even with special equipment, dockside unloading could take twelve days;³²⁴⁰ of course, throwing sacks overboard requires less care.

27:39–44: REACHING LAND SAFELY

The sailors manage to bring the ship close enough to shore to provide hope of reaching it safely, but, maintaining suspense, the ship itself can proceed no further (27:41). Malta (28:1) may have been a common stopping-point for Alexandrian grain ships,³²⁴¹ but this ship is approaching the island in poor weather, from a very different direction, and not to a major port. Although topographic details are debated, most scholars agree that the reefs that ground them are near St. Paul's Bay on northeast Malta.³²⁴²

Realizing that they now have just one opportunity to reach shore, the sailors attempt three complex maneuvers together: releasing the stern anchors; releasing the rudder; and raising a sail. First, they apparently cut loose the anchors on both sides of the stern; urgency was paramount, and they could not reuse them later.³²⁴³ Second, they unbound the rudders, which had been tied to prevent unwelcome movement. Now they would

³²³⁷ Lucian, *Ship* 5; Josephus, *Life* 14–15; Casson, *Travel*, 156–59; idem, *Mariners*, 211; Rapske, “Travel,” 31.

³²³⁸ Friedländer, *Life*, 1:351; Casson, *Mariners*, 209.

³²³⁹ Rapske, “Travel,” 35; following especially G. E. Rickman, “The Grain Trade under the Roman Empire,” pages 261–75 in *The Seaborne Commerce of Ancient Rome: Studies in Archaeology and History* (ed. J. H. D’Arms and E. C. Kopff; Rome: American Academy, 1980), 261, 265.

³²⁴⁰ Rapske, “Travel,” 31.

³²⁴¹ See Friedländer, *Life*, 1:352; Casson, *Mariners*, 208.

³²⁴² Finegan, *Apostles*, 200–2; see now the strongest candidates in R. Bauckham, *The Christian World around the New Testament: Collected Essays II* (WUNT 386; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 337–51, esp. 342–44.

³²⁴³ Some suggest that three of the four anchor ropes simply gave way during the night.

need the rudders to steer as best as they were able toward the beach, a difficult maneuver.³²⁴⁴

Most ships had only a mainsail, but larger ships such as this one also had a second mast projecting forward over the bow and carrying the foresail (27:40), which could be used for both steering and driving.³²⁴⁵ Sailors might remove the foresail when needing to slow down for harbor entry;³²⁴⁶ but now they hoist it to catch maximum wind toward the beach. In *ran the ship aground; the bow stuck*, Luke borrows epic language familiar to his audience;³²⁴⁷ ancient writers relished describing ships crashing into land.³²⁴⁸ The reef here may be a sandbar or a shoal such as St. Paul's Bank; with the ship's prow now wedged, precluding further advance, the stern bore the full brunt of this location's particularly violent waves.

The soldiers' plan . . . to kill the prisoners (27:42) was for the soldiers' protection. Probably to prevent collusion, officials often punished guards with the penalties due prisoners who escaped (12:18–19; cf. 16:27).³²⁴⁹ If a prisoner died by accident, witnesses would need to attest this.³²⁵⁰ The shipwreck should absolve them of liability here, but if they failed to prove this, they could be executed.³²⁵¹ Whereas chained prisoners would drown, unchained prisoners could escape (27:42), and bodies unaccounted for leave ambiguity. Given such stakes, and given the unpredictability and political considerations of superiors, it was safer to kill the prisoners.

While some Roman citizens like Paul were undoubtedly transported to Rome for trial, most criminals shipped to Rome were probably already convicted, and were intended for the *venationes*, the bloody games to amuse the Roman people at the expense of the condemned prisoners' lives.³²⁵² Killing them now might seem less painless.

The soldiers respect Paul (27:31–32) yet might fear even his escape (27:42); divinely aided escapes did not always turn out well for the guards

³²⁴⁴ Ancient ships used "steering-paddles" or oars as rudders and had two, joined by a crossbar but controlled by one helmsman. The helmsman would pull the long tiller toward him or push it away to control the two steering oars (Casson, *Mariners*, 194; cf. 77).

³²⁴⁵ Rapske, "Travel," 33.

³²⁴⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 194. Sails could be pulled down in a storm (Petronius, *Sat.* 114).

³²⁴⁷ Commentators note, e.g., Homer, *Od.* 9.148, 546; Virgil, *Aen.* 5.206.

³²⁴⁸ See Johnson, *Acts*, 449–50. Many elaborated more than Luke (e.g., Achilles Tatius 3.4.3).

³²⁴⁹ Later formalized in Justinian's code.

³²⁵⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 32. People were not criminally liable for accidents (Robinson, *Criminal Law*, 16).

³²⁵¹ Rapske, *Custody*, 271.

³²⁵² Ramsay, "Roads and Travel," 397; cf. Suetonius, *Claud.* 34.1–2; *Nero* 12.1.

(cf. 12:19)! Perhaps they plan to kill only the noncitizen prisoners in 27:42, but the centurion might find it difficult to justify their inconsistency in retrospect. Deities might avenge their favorites, so Julius spares Paul at all costs (27:43).³²⁵³

Passengers probably climbed down ropes into the frigid waters. Swimming, especially in such waters, could demonstrate physical prowess,³²⁵⁴ and often proved necessary for survival;³²⁵⁵ those who failed could drown.³²⁵⁶ Limited sleep and two weeks without eating until now (27:33) undoubtedly left many weak, but waves would push toward shore even those floating on planks and other items.³²⁵⁷

God preserves not only Paul's fellow prisoners (27:43), but all aboard for his sake (27:24), making Paul a benefactor par excellence. In antiquity, some attributed the survival of even one swimming fugitive to divine favor; lack of storm-stilling here notwithstanding, the survival of all 276 passengers as Paul's God promised could only be attributed to God's protection.

28:1–6: SNAKEBITE IN MALTA

Relevant to Luke's apologetic as well as to his biographic interest, Paul's care for others (27:24, 34; 28:3) displays an *êthos* that would support him in any forensic context (see comments at Acts 23:1–5; 24:14–17). God's protection of Paul also contributes to Luke's apologetic. God vindicates Paul in the face of snakebite (see comment on 28:4–5) as he vindicated him at sea; Paul must see Caesar.

The fugitives' host island proves to be Malta (28:1),³²⁵⁸ about 58 miles south of Sicily (cf. 28:12). St. Paul's Bay, the most commonly proposed site of landfall, is 3–4 miles (about 5 km) from the northeast tip of the island.

³²⁵³ A centurion who befriended a prisoner might rejoice at his survival (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.231), so long as this did not risk the centurion's own life (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.232–33).

³²⁵⁴ E.g., Josephus, *Life* 15; Homer, *Od.* 5.388–89, 399, 438–41; 7.276–77, 280–81; 23.23–38. Ancient swimming resembled the modern crawl, with alternating strokes (W. Decker, "Swimming," *BNP* 13:978).

³²⁵⁵ Thucydides 2.90.5; Nepos 12 [Chabrias], 4.3; Valerius Maximus 3.2.11; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 63.4).

³²⁵⁶ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 23.233–38; Livy 28.36.12; Longus 1.30; Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.5.

³²⁵⁷ Cf. Homer, *Od.* 5.371; Ovid, *Metam.* 11.559–61; Lucian, *Tox.* 20–21; Xenophon, *Eph.* 2.11; *Apoll.* K. Tyre 12. Many of the boards may be from those earlier used to separate sections of grain. Although ink on papyrus is water soluble, Luke's notes could well be preserved; for available containers, see Keener, *Acts*, 4:3657–60.

³²⁵⁸ The island also called Malta today (Pliny, *Nat.* 3.8.92), toward which a northeaster could blow them from Crete and Cauda (Acts 27:14–16), not the alternative site off Dalmatia

Natives (28:2) is literally *barbaroi*. This designation often reflected Greek ethnocentrism,³²⁵⁹ but given Luke's depiction of their hospitality, most commentators infer here the term's original linguistic sense: they were non-Greek-speakers.³²⁶⁰ Thus Luke does not call Paul or Jewish colleagues barbarians, since they spoke Greek.

If Luke's language does evoke any cultural stereotypes, it is apparently to subvert them.³²⁶¹ These "barbarians" display the highly regarded virtues of *kindness*³²⁶² and hospitality (see excursus at 16:15), supporting Luke's ethnic universalism (1:8) and perhaps subverting a Greek stereotype. One basis for praising a location in antiquity was its hospitality (Menander Rhetor 2.3, 384.22), and by that criterion Malta's "barbarians" fare better than elite Philippi, cultured Athens, or sacred Jerusalem.³²⁶³ Hospitality was particularly needed for victims of shipwreck,³²⁶⁴ who were otherwise often destitute and forced to beg.³²⁶⁵

Although Malta averages temperatures in the 60s F (above 15 °C) in November, but the survivors had only their barest, drenched garments.³²⁶⁶ This was also part of the wetter season in Malta, with *rain* (28:2) reflecting the recent weather system (27:20). *Kindling a fire* (28:2) was a natural response for those drenched during a storm at sea (Virgil, *Aen.* 1.174–76).

Whereas a rooster reveals Peter's failure in another fireside scene (Luke 22:55–61), a viper (Acts 28:5) reveals Paul's "power." When stiff from cold, snakes can be mistaken for twigs until revived by heat.³²⁶⁷ People

(noted in Ptolemy 2.16.9; Pliny, *Nat.* 3.26.152) or other locations that bore this name (Greek *Melitê*; Strabo 7 frg. 50a; 10.3.19; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.9.32), or Kefallinía.

³²⁵⁹ E.g., Euripides, *Heraclea* 130–31; *Orestes* 485–86; Demosthenes, *Philippic* 1.40; 3.31; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 5.4.3; Pausanias 8.22.6; 9.16.4; Diogenes Laertius 1.33; D. E. McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 54.

³²⁶⁰ They were ethnically and culturally Punic, and spoke a Punic (Carthaginian) variety of the ancestral Phoenician tongue, though the elites spoke Latin or were bilingual. Punic language long persisted (Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 193).

³²⁶¹ See Jipp, *Visitations*, 24, 40–42, 103–5, 258–59; cf. also idem, "Hospitable Barbarians: Luke's Ethnic Reasoning in Acts 28:1–10," *JTS* 68 (1, 2017): 23–45.

³²⁶² *Philanthrôpia*, one basis for praising localities (Menander Rhetor 1.3, 363.6).

³²⁶³ See Jipp, *Visitations*, 40–42.

³²⁶⁴ Euripides, *Cycl.* 299–301; Justin, *Epit.* 16.3.11; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 95.51; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7.5–6, 55–58.

³²⁶⁵ Plutarch, *Cam.* 31.5; Phaedrus 4.23.24–25; Xenophon, *Eph.* 3.4.

³²⁶⁶ For drenched persons feeling cold, cf. Polybius 3.71.11–3.72.6. Early mornings (27:27, 33, 39) are also cool (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 52.1).

³²⁶⁷ Bruce, *Commentary*, 521; cf. Babrius 143.1–6; Phaedrus 4.20; vipers fleeing flame in Luke 3:7.

recognized that snakebites were dangerous,³²⁶⁸ though folk tradition envisioned various preventions and remedies,³²⁶⁹ and sometimes protection by a sort of holiness.³²⁷⁰ Because Paul alone is bitten, some envision here a Satanic attack.³²⁷¹

Malta lacks poisonous snakes today,³²⁷² so some scholars suggest here the nontoxic *Coronella austriaca*, which resembles a viper and can act as in 28:3–4.³²⁷³ Although Luke does not know the local language, even facial expressions and gestures could suggest to him that local people expected the viper to be deadly. Luke does believe they are at the least partly mistaken (28:4),³²⁷⁴ nevertheless, we ought not assume that poisonous snakes could not vanish on a heavily inhabited island over the course of two millennia.³²⁷⁵

Many scholars today understand Luke's portrayal of Paul's survival as vindicating his innocence.³²⁷⁶ Shipwrecks were often viewed as signs of divine punishment,³²⁷⁷ a perspective that could be raised even in court,³²⁷⁸ snakes could also be associated with vengeance.³²⁷⁹ A survivor of shipwreck could be viewed as having divine favor,³²⁸⁰ unless spared only to face a

³²⁶⁸ Homer, *Il.* 2.721–23; Sophocles, *Philoc.* 632; Diodorus Siculus 20.42.2; Ovid, *Metam.* 11.775–76; Pliny, *Nat.* 25.55.99; *t. B. Qam.* 1:4; cf. A. Touwaide, “Disease,” *BNP* 4:543–54 (548).

³²⁶⁹ See Pliny, *Nat.* 20.9.18; 20.13.23; 20.51.132; 20.63.171; 20.71.182; 20.87.236; 20.96.256–58; 20.100.264; 24.20.30; 24.35.52; 24.92.148; 27.98.124; 28.7.35; 28.42.149–54; 29.15.59; 29.21.69–70.

³²⁷⁰ Cf. Iamblichus, *V.P.* 28.142; *t. Ber.* 3:20; divine protection or remedies in Exod 4:3; 7:9–12; Num 21:6–9; Ps 91:13; probably symbolically, Luke 10:19.

³²⁷¹ Thomas, *Deliverance*, 290–93.

³²⁷² See esp. Sultana and Falzon, *Wildlife*, 199, 202 (cited in Le Cornu, *Acts*, 1479).

³²⁷³ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 153.

³²⁷⁴ He once was a murderer of sorts (26:10), but Paul is the cause of others' survival rather than a true criminal who brought judgment.

³²⁷⁵ Barrett, *Acts*, 1222; pointed out already in Abbott, *Acts*, 257. Some African informants have noted to me the local eradication of threatening species over the course of several generations. Similarly, Roman exploitation drove North African elephants extinct (K.-W. Weeber, “Environment, Environmental Behavior,” *BNP* 4:1002–8 [1007]).

³²⁷⁶ See, e.g., Talbert and Hayes, “Sea Storms.”

³²⁷⁷ See, e.g., Justin, *Epit.* 27.2.1; Publ. Syr. 331; Valerius Maximus 1.1. ext. 1; Seneca, *Controv.* 7.1.4; Babr. 117; Jonah 1:7–9; 1 En. 101:5.

³²⁷⁸ Cicero, *Verr.* 2.1.18.46; cf. Lysias, *Or.* 6.21–32, §§105–6.

³²⁷⁹ See Kauppi, *Gods*, 108–10.

³²⁸⁰ Valerius Maximus 1.8. ext. 7; Lucian, *Phal.* 2.4 (ironically in this case); *Posts* 1 (again reflecting Lucian's skepticism). See esp. Miles and Trompf, “Luke and Antiphon” (esp. 262–64); Ladouceur, “Shipwreck and Pollution.”

worse fate (Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.4.9–10). Evildoers who seemed to escape death in the short run would suffer their just desserts afterward.³²⁸¹

These Maltese residents thus wrongly conclude that *justice* – here probably personified – *has not allowed* this *murderer's* survival (28:4; contrast 3:14–15). They might think here of the Punic deity of justice,³²⁸² but Luke will know especially the Greek and probably Roman equivalents.³²⁸³

Discovering Paul unharmed, observers again (cf. 28:4) come to the wrong conclusion: *that he was a god* (28:6). Their change of mind inverts that encountered in 14:11–19: from wrongdoer to deity in this case, and from deity to wrongdoer in the other.³²⁸⁴ Ancients often narrated theoxenies – unwitting hospitality or inhospitality toward a deity, with appropriate rewards or punishments following.³²⁸⁵ Both initial verdicts of the “barbarians” miss the mark: Paul is neither being punished by deity nor a deity himself, but God vindicates him as his agent.

28:7–10: HEALINGS AND HOSPITALITY IN MALTA

Local misunderstanding of Paul in 28:1–6 is corrected through Paul's continuing ministry in 28:7–10. Paul ultimately endears himself to the hospitable people of the island through benefactions of healing as he had endeared himself to the people aboard the ship by speaking as God's agent.

Many kind locals who helped the stranded seafarers may have worked as tenants on the nearby estates of *Publius* (28:7). Like many members of local elites in the western empire, Publius was a Roman citizen. The title

³²⁸¹ E.g., Antonius Diogenes, *Thule* 109b–110a, 112a; commentators note esp. *Greek Anthology* 7.290; 9.269; but much earlier, cf. Akkadian proverb 1.40.5; Sumerian proverb 3 (*ANET*² 425); most familiar to Luke's ideal audience, Amos 5:19.

³²⁸² Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 341; Larkin, *Acts*, 380. Punic religion persisted in Punic areas in the Roman period (J. Scheid, “Africa: Religion,” *BNP* 1:294–95), although locals often gave Punic deities Roman names (Rives, *Religion*, 71).

³²⁸³ E.g., Euripides, *Oed. frg.* 555; *Archelaus frg.* 255.2–6; *Phrixus frg.* 835; Horace, *Ode* 2.17.15–16.

³²⁸⁴ Bruce, *Commentary*, 523 n. 12; Gaventa, *Acts*, 358. The passage contains comic relief at the expense of false religious beliefs (as in 17:18; 19:32; 23:9–10); for ridicule of paganism, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:2159–63. For the thin line between deity and mortals in some gentile thought, see Keener, *Acts*, 2:1782–86, 2148–49.

³²⁸⁵ On theoxenies, see Jipp, *Visitation*, 77–95, 122–26 (for divine agents, e.g., 81–88; in Luke-Acts, 219–35); cf. Keener, *Acts*, 2:2148–49. Jipp places the motif in the larger context of hospitality in *Visitation*, 59–170 (in Luke-Acts, 171–218); on which subject see also Koenig, *Hospitality*; Arterbury, *Hospitality*; briefly, Keener, *Acts*, 3:2414–20. Jipp contrasts gentile welcome here with Jewish rejection in 28:17–25 (Jipp, *Visitation*, 25, 29, 274–81).

translated *leading* was common for influential citizens (also in 13:50; 17:4; 28:17).³²⁸⁶ It is also attested in inscriptions from Malta itself for the chief citizen (IG 14.601 = IGRR 1.512).³²⁸⁷ Some find here a special office, but Luke may use the term more loosely. Publius would have hosted at his table people of rank, not all 276 castaways, but the former include the centurion and Paul, who by now has the respect of all his fellow voyagers.³²⁸⁸ Conversation would surely include the events leading up to their arrival on Malta, hence Paul's divine favor.

Fever (28:8), most commonly malaria (but sometimes typhoid), was widespread in Mediterranean antiquity.³²⁸⁹ In Greek, *fever* here is plural, probably meaning intermittent, coming and going, as malaria and other fevers often did.³²⁹⁰ Treatments of fevers varied widely, often lacking empirical basis;³²⁹¹ religious³²⁹² and magical appeals were also common.³²⁹³ Fever sometimes occurred with dysentery,³²⁹⁴ though apparently more frequently in summer.³²⁹⁵ Dysentery,³²⁹⁶ and dysentery with explicit fever,³²⁹⁷ often led to death. Although dysentery normally weakened patients,³²⁹⁸ many felt that it sometimes benefited a patient by cleaning them out;³²⁹⁹ many folk cures

³²⁸⁶ E.g., Strabo 14.42; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.23,56; Velleius Paterculus 2.30.6; 2.53.2; 2.74.4 ("a leading man of the place," LCL); 2.90.1; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.2.2; 6.31.3; Lucian, *Alex.* 45; *OGIS* 528, 544, 545, 549, 652; not least, for the imperial *princeps*.

³²⁸⁷ Wikenhauser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 283; Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 669; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 153.

³²⁸⁸ Paul thus eats with gentiles here; cf. Acts 11:3–12; 15:20, 29; 16:4.

³²⁸⁹ *CD*³ 486; A. Touwaide, "Disease," *BNP* 4:543–54 (550); idem, "Malaria," *BNP* 8:195–96; V. Nutton, "Fever," *BNP* 5:409–10. See further here Weissenrieder, *Images*, 342–44; C. S. Keener, "Fever and Dysentery in Acts 28:8 and Ancient Medicine," *BBR* 19 (3, 2009): 393–402.

³²⁹⁰ *OCD*³ 486; cf. Hippocrates, *Progn.* 20.1–22; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 34.17. For continuous fever, see, e.g., Hippocrates, *Epid.* 2.2.6; 5.1, 16. This could be nocturnal malaria, keeping patients awake at night (Hippocrates, *Epid.* 7.2); ancients might think of a winter fever (Hippocrates, *Reg. Ac. Dis.* 24) or a quartan fever beginning in autumn but persisting with another sickness (Hippocrates, *Nat. Man* 15.22–40).

³²⁹¹ E.g., Pliny, *Nat.* 26.71.115–16; 28.23.82–83; 28.66.228–29; cf. Stambaugh, *City*, 136–37.

³²⁹² Valerius Maximus 2.5.6 (offering to the goddess Fever).

³²⁹³ Pliny, *Nat.* 30.30.98–104; M. W. Dickie, "Bonds and Headless Demons in Greco-Roman Magic," *GRBS* 40 (1, 1999): 99–104; D. Levene, "Heal O' Israel: A Pair of Duplicate Magic Bowls from the Pergamon Museum in Berlin," *JJS* 54 (1, 2003): 104–21.

³²⁹⁴ Hippocrates, *Epid.* 2.6.26; 7.3.

³²⁹⁵ Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1.15.16–18; cf. 7.39; *A.W.P.* 7.27–29; 10.13. It is winter in Acts 28:8.

³²⁹⁶ Hippocrates, *Aff.* 23; *Epid.* 5.30. For survivors, *Epid.* 4.38, 41; 5.90; 7.3, 99; for predictions based on bile color, cf. Galen, *N.F.* 2.9.131. It was a leading cause of infant mortality (*OCD*³ 486).

³²⁹⁷ Hippocrates, *Prorr.* 2.22; one survives in *Epid.* 7.3.

³²⁹⁸ Hippocrates, *Regimen in Acute Diseases* 35.

³²⁹⁹ Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1.20.1, 4; 2.6.26; *Prorr.* 2.22.

circulated.³³⁰⁰ Scholars often link the fever with recurrent and persistent “Malta fever,” from a microorganism found in the milk of Malta’s goats. Others object that dysentery is not part of Malta fever, suggesting instead more generally “acute bacillary dysentery with fever” from “infected food or contaminated water.”³³⁰¹

Just as Jesus heals his host Simon’s mother-in-law in Luke 4:38–39, Paul here heals his host Publius’s father (28:8), leading to many crowds seeking healing for themselves (Luke 4:40; Acts 28:9).³³⁰² Ancient benefaction ideology stressed reciprocity; Publius and Malta’s residents benefit Paul (27:7, 10), though Paul benefits them even more (27:8–9). As a Roman officer, Julius could impress (commandeer) supplies, but much of what he would have to obtain compulsorily, Paul achieves by his benefits of healing (28:8–10).³³⁰³

28:11–15: FINAL VOYAGE, TO ROME

Brief travelogues (27:1–8; 28:11–16) frame the shipwreck story, placing it in the less eventful yet fuller geographic context of Paul’s voyage. Luke also uses some of the stops, however, to show the unity of Diaspora Christians with Paul and his mission (27:3; 28:14–15). That believers from Rome come to welcome Paul a considerable distance from the city reinforces Paul’s *êthos*, reminding us of how well-loved Paul was by his contemporaries (cf. 20:36–38).

Julius could requisition passage on a vessel to Italy.³³⁰⁴ The *three months* (28:11) may correspond roughly to the three winter months most difficult for sailing. If this was 59 CE, they might reach Malta in late October (27:9), and leave Malta (28:11) around Feb. 5.³³⁰⁵ Sailing season usually opened fully around March 10, but sailing could begin as early as the west winds began blowing, usually around February 7 or 8 (Pliny, *Nat.* 2.47.122). Some captains

³³⁰⁰ Pliny, *Nat.* 20.11.21; 20.84.227–28; 20.86.234; 22.55.116; 23.3.3; 23.81.162; 24.72.116; 4.79.129; 28.58.202–10. These included magic (30.19.55–58) and even unbridled sexual activity (Hippocrates, *Epid.* 7.122)!

³³⁰¹ J. Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 160–61; cf. Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 176.

³³⁰² Despite the parallel, Luke’s source for the former account is Mark 1:30–31, and the latter is “we” material.

³³⁰³ Against some, Paul’s signs do not decrease as Acts progresses; they proliferate in missionary situations (see Dollar, “Theology of Healing,” 46–47).

³³⁰⁴ See Rapske, *Custody*, 272–73.

³³⁰⁵ Jewett, *Chronology*, 51–52. Malta’s primary port was probably near what is now Valetta.

would leave as soon as weather allowed. Probably winter caught this *Alexandrian ship* on its second run, but it would be one of the earliest grain ships of spring to reach Italy (see comment on Acts 27:6). Although the sea between Malta and Sicily could be dangerous (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.46.103), the voyage was just about 100 kilometers (some 65 miles) and in reasonably good weather could be covered quickly and safely.

In contrast to earlier custom, the *figurehead* (28:11) probably is not a carved image constituting the prow's beak³³⁰⁶ but rather figures painted on both sides of the prow (as in the *Isis* depicted by Lucian).³³⁰⁷ This ship was dedicated to and named for the *Twin Brothers*, i.e., Castor and Polydeuces (in Latin, Pollux).³³⁰⁸ They were thought to subdue the sea's raging and help ships facing storms.³³⁰⁹ They were "saviors" at sea,³³¹⁰ scorning their help was deemed hubris.³³¹¹ Thus sailors invoked them in storms or other troubles at sea.³³¹² Sometimes they appeared as stars,³³¹³ perhaps related to corona discharge on the sails (Seneca, *Nat. Q.* 1.1.13) later called "St. Elmo's fire." They were thought to watch over Rome,³³¹⁴ the forum of which had a prominent temple³³¹⁵ and statue of Castor.³³¹⁶ Ironically, whereas this ship trusts in false gods for protection, Luke's audience has already seen that true protection comes only from the real God (fitting the anti-pagan polemic in Acts 7:43; 14:15; 17:16, 29).

The voyage to Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli (28:12–13) and thence to Rome (28:14) was a conventional route.³³¹⁷ The heart of Syracuse was an island partly sheltering a bay in southeast Sicily (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.38.98). It was a major port

³³⁰⁶ Casson, *Mariners*, 42, 79; though cf. 193; plate 42. Cf. the head of a deity in the niche on the prow in Casson, *Mariners*, plate 38.

³³⁰⁷ Cf. BDAG; Lucian, *Ship* 5.

³³⁰⁸ On whom, see, e.g., Ovid, *Fasti* 5.709–20; Pausanias 1.18.2; 3.13.6; 3.16.2–3; 4.3.1; 5.15.5. An island near Sicily was apparently dedicated to these deities as well (Pliny, *Nat.* 3.10.96).

³³⁰⁹ E.g., Euripides, *El.* 1240–42; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.720.

³³¹⁰ E.g., Diodorus Siculus 4.43.1–2; Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 2.37; Lucian, *Dial. G.* 287 (25/26, *Apollo and Hermes*); *Alex.* 4; cf. *OCD*³ 484; K. Backhaus, "Paulus und die Dioskuren (Apg 28.11) Über zwei denkwürdige Schutzpatrone des Evangeliums," *NTS* 61 (2, 2015): 165–82.

³³¹¹ Plutarch, *Pleas. L.* 23, *Mor.* 1103C; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 64.20–21.

³³¹² E.g., Silius Italicus 15.82–83; Catullus 68A.65; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.29.

³³¹³ Valerius Maximus 1.8.1; Plutarch, *Lys.* 12.1; Maximus of Tyre 9.7; Lucian, *Ship* 9; Ps.-Lucian, *Charid.* 3. Lucian regards many of these claims as fabricated (Lucian, *Posts* 1).

³³¹⁴ Valerius Maximus 1.8.1.

³³¹⁵ Cicero, *Sest.* 15.34; 37.79; 38.83; 39.85; *Quinct.* 4.17; *Phil.* 6.5.13; *Verr.* 2.1.50.130; 2.1.51.133; *Res Gestae* 4.20; Suetonius, *Calig.* 22.2. It was visible from the venue of Verres's trial (*Verr.* 2.3.16.41).

³³¹⁶ Statius, *Silv.* 1.1.53–54; Suetonius, *Tib.* 20.

³³¹⁷ Casson, *Mariners*, 208; cf. Suetonius, *Tib.* 5.3; Friedländer, *Life*, 1:352.

(2.4.53.118), about a quarter the size of Rome,³³¹⁸ and renowned for its beauty (2.4.52.117). Rhegium, on Italy's southwest coast (at the tip of Italy's boot), was roughly 70 miles beyond Syracuse. It was just 6–7 miles across from Sicily,³³¹⁹ but the narrow passage between them was considered dangerous.³³²⁰ Rhegium's inhabitants were Roman citizens (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.60.135), though it was one of the few areas near Sicily to retain its Greek roots (Strabo 6.1.2).

From Rhegium to Puteoli is over 200 miles (about 350 km), so arrival *on the second day* fits the favorable wind and what is known of ships of that era.³³²¹ Puteoli was on the northern side of the Gulf of Naples, just some 20 kilometers west of Naples (Neapolis) on the most sheltered part of its bay. Before Claudius improved Rome's harbor in Ostia (Suetonius, *Claud.* 20), Puteoli was the Alexandrian grain fleet's primary naval destination,³³²² and Ostia had not surpassed it by the time of Paul's arrival.³³²³ In Paul's day, Puteoli's crowds would stand along the docks watching for the sails of the first Alexandrian ships (Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 77.1).

Given Puteoli's importance as an Italian port, the appearance of Christians there (28:14) is not surprising, since Christians were also in Rome (Rom 1:7; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). Other groups from the east settled there, and often propagated their cults;³³²⁴ Puteoli also had a sizeable Jewish community (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.328; *War* 2.104).³³²⁵ Given Paul's lengthy and expensive³³²⁶ letter to the Romans a few years before, Paul would be known. Despite the apparent shame of his captivity, Christians were undoubtedly eager to host him, again relieving Julius of the need to commandeer lodging and provisions. Three days was normal hospitality, but a week was acceptable;³³²⁷ that Julius on his part permits such a delay

³³¹⁸ Cf. Cary and Haerhoff, *Life*, 103; cf. its size in Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.53.118.

³³¹⁹ Pliny estimated the Straits of Messina, between Italy and Sicily, at about 1.5 miles (12 stadia; Pliny, *Nat.* 3.5.73; 3.8.86); in fact the strait is 8 miles (13 km) wide at the south and 2 miles (3 km) wide at the north (Finegan, *Apostles*, 208). Rhegium (modern Reggio) was estimated at 11.5 miles (93 stadia) from that tip.

³³²⁰ Thucydides 4.24.4; Polybius 34.3.9–12, especially 34.3.10; Justin, *Epit.* 4.1.9, 16; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.55.146; Pliny, *Nat.* 3.8.87 (in light of 3.5.73).

³³²¹ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 224.

³³²² Casson, *Travel*, 129; idem, *Mariners*, 199–200. In the late Republic, Puteoli was known for its granaries (Cicero, *Fin.* 2.26.84).

³³²³ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 224.

³³²⁴ Grant, *Gods*, 29–32.

³³²⁵ Clarke, "Italy," 480.

³³²⁶ See cost estimates in E. R. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 169 (although Diocletian's price edict reflects considerable inflation beyond the first century).

³³²⁷ Hock, *Social Context*, 29. Cf. a year in Cicero, *Fam.* 13.19.1.

indicates the great respect he now has for his prisoner, given what he has witnessed (Acts 27:10, 26, 31–32, 34, 41, 44; 28:5, 8–9).³³²⁸ *Believers* in 28:14–15 is literally “siblings” (*adelphoi*). The Christian movement was like an extended family (Luke 18:29–30): one could expect to find hospitality wherever one traveled.

Even as the crow flies, Puteoli remained over 120 miles (some 200 km) from Rome, and closer to 150 miles (243 km) by road.³³²⁹ This journey could take a week,³³³⁰ and they would trek most of it along the Via Appia, or Appian Way. Given the frequent movement of travelers, Roman Christians (28:15) would know of Paul’s coming after his week in Puteoli (28:14). Now that Claudius was dead (cf. 18:2), some of Paul’s friends from Corinth had settled back in Rome (Rom 16:3–13). They had reason to anticipate his eventual visit (Rom 1:10; 15:23–24).

The disciples travel to “meet” him (Acts 28:15), offering the sort of welcome appropriate to a dignitary.³³³¹ Paul’s celebrated reception by Roman believers parallels Jesus’s “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem (Luke 19:37–38),³³³² though both presage suffering at the hands of the local establishment. Once feared by Jerusalem’s believers (9:26), Paul is now honored by Roman believers, again illustrating the gospel’s progress from Jerusalem to the heart of the empire.

Paul, who earlier encouraged others (27:22, 25), now is encouraged himself.³³³³ The delegations of Roman Christians travel more than a day’s journey along the Appian Way to meet him. *The Forum of Appius* was 43 Roman miles (39.5 miles; 63.5 km) southeast of Rome (for the forty-third milestone, see *CIL* 10.6825), and *Three Taverns* was 33 Roman miles

³³²⁸ A centurion might also help a favored prisoner if he anticipated his soon release (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.230–33). Ignatius’s guards also accepted hospitality en route to Rome and delays (Ignatius, *Rom.* 5.1; Rapske, *Custody*, 275).

³³²⁹ Finegan, *Apostles*, 213.

³³³⁰ With Julius requisitioning lodging in inns or government hostels, where available (Rapske, *Custody*, 206).

³³³¹ E.g., Justin, *Epit.* 5.4.9; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.7.2; Cicero, *Pis.* 22.51; Nicolaus, *Aug.* 14; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.7.6–7; 4.1.4; 10.10.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 40.13–14; Tacitus, *Ann.* 16.24; Plutarch, *Alex.* 14.1; Cicero 33.5; 1 Sam 13:10; 18:6; 30:21; Josephus, *War* 3.459; *Ant.* 19.340. Failure to come out to greet one could cause offense (Plutarch, *Cic.* 41.2; Suetonius, *Claud.* 38.1).

³³³² Consider the ironic contrast (cf. 2 Cor 2:14–16) with the triumphal entries of Roman generals (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 9.26.9; 11.50.1; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.26.65–67; Livy 3.29.4–5; 31.49.3; 35.8.9; 40.43.4–6; Plutarch, *Cam.* 7.1; *Caes.* 55.2; 56.4), perhaps emphasizing the victory of martyrdom (Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 55).

³³³³ Visits of friends often encouraged prisoners (Rapske, *Custody*, 385–88).

(30 miles; 49 km) southeast of Rome.³³³⁴ Sturdy travelers could make the trip from Three Taverns to Rome in a single day.³³³⁵ Both sites mentioned in 28:15 were regular stopping-places along the Via Appia,³³³⁶ so it is likely that the delegates spent either the coming night or the preceding one (awaiting him) there.

28:16–22: PAUL MEETS JEWISH LEADERS IN ROME

Following the Appian Way, Paul undoubtedly entered Rome (28:16) by the Porta Capena, probably early in 60 CE.

A Closer Look: Luke's Conclusion (28:16–31)

On the most common dating of Acts, Luke could have narrated Paul's eventual execution in Rome, but, in keeping with a pattern through most of his work, he concludes on a happier note that portends the gospel's trajectory.

Unfinished endings were common in ancient literature.³³³⁷ Perhaps some works ended abruptly because they were never finished (perhaps Thucydides 8.109.1; Lucan, *Civil War* 10.542–46).³³³⁸ Yet even rhetorically sophisticated works sometimes conclude abruptly simply, it appears, because a point is finished.³³³⁹ Some endings, however, were left open to the future deliberately, including in hellenistic historiography.³³⁴⁰ "Open" endings appear earlier in Luke-Acts,³³⁴¹ and Luke provides adequate closure by rehearsing persistent themes before his closing, hence pointing to the future "through circularity and parallelism."³³⁴²

³³³⁴ Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 345.

³³³⁵ Clarke, "Italy," 481.

³³³⁶ Cicero, *Att.* 2.10 (Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 345; Witherington, *Acts*, 787). From Rome to the Appii Forum on the Appian Way, see, e.g., Horace, *Sat.* 1.5.1–8.

³³³⁷ See Plutarch, *Fame Ath.* 8, *Mor.* 351B; *Fort. Alex.* 2.13, *Mor.* 345B; *Fort. Rom.* 13, *Mor.* 326C; *Uned. R.* 7, *Mor.* 782F; Isocrates, *Demon.* 52, *Or.* 1; Demetrius, *Style* 5.304; Hdn 8.8.8; *LAB*; Mark 16:8; esp. Magness, *Sense*.

³³³⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 12 complains that Thucydides violates his stated intention in Thucydides 5.26. Unfinished works often failed to survive (Pliny, *Ep.* 5.8.6–7).

³³³⁹ E.g., Isaeus, *Pyrr.* 80; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosth.* 58; Valerius Maximus 9.15. ext. 2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 13.37; 19.5; 34.53; 41.14; 70; 71; Menander Rhetor 1.3, 367.8.

³³⁴⁰ See Marguerat, "Enigma of Closing," 304. Already the *Iliad* could project beyond its narrative to subsequent events in its narrative world (cf. Hector as Troy's last defender; 6.403; 22.506–7).

³³⁴¹ Luke 22:47–53 (Tannehill, *Luke*, 298) and 24:44–53 (Dunn, *Acts*, 278).

³³⁴² Tannehill, *Acts*, 354; see further Troftgruben, *Conclusion*, 144–78.

Because the mission of 1:8 continues, Acts seems deliberately open-ended. If, despite obstacles and sufferings, the gospel has reached the (Lukan) world's capital, it will reach the ends of the earth. Luke thus concludes Acts with Rome as a further, proleptic step toward the "ends of the earth" (1:8).³³⁴³ By focusing here on Paul's preaching (esp. 28:31) and not his martyrdom, Luke underlines this theme. In antiquity John Chrysostom already recognized that Acts, following rhetorical conventions, closes here to leave the auditor thirsty for more and to reflect on its message.³³⁴⁴ Acts' incomplete ending probably even invites the audience to participate in the mission.³³⁴⁵

Fitting a kingdom embodied in the cross, Paul fulfills his own proleptic mission as a captive.³³⁴⁶ This ending would be all the more striking in a setting where many wanted to dissociate themselves from the memory of Paul's imprisonment and execution.³³⁴⁷ This ending allows Luke to reframe the church's memory of Paul and his martyrdom, thereby supporting the expansion of the Pauline (noncircumcisionist) gentile mission.³³⁴⁸

Despite the openness of Luke's ending, he also revisits earlier themes.³³⁴⁹ Closing summaries were common in speeches and rhetorical essays,³³⁵⁰ other essays,³³⁵¹ and sometimes in books of history.³³⁵² While Luke provides no explicit summary, his use of narrative suspension in his closing scene fits other ancient models and allows him to emphasize major themes.³³⁵³ Luke here revisits some themes developed during Paul's defense in Acts 21–26, including reference to Paul's chains, the hope of Israel,

³³⁴³ Given Luke's Isaian backdrop for "ends of the earth" (1:8; 13:47; Isa 49:6), Acts clearly has not *literally* reached that goal; see J. Moles, "Time and Space Travel in Luke-Acts," pages 101–22 in Dupertuis and Penner, *History*, 117, citing also the opinion of "Cyril, Theodoret, Chrysostom, and Ambrose."

³³⁴⁴ Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 55 (pointed out by Talbert, *Acts*, 231).

³³⁴⁵ Rosner, "Progress," 232–33; Moles, "Time," 118; Jipp, *Visitation*, 286–87.

³³⁴⁶ See Parsons, *Departure*, 155.

³³⁴⁷ See Keener, "Apologetic"; cf. Spivey, Smith, and Black, *Anatomy*, 267.

³³⁴⁸ Cf. Marguerat, "Enigma of Closing," 304. For Luke's emphasis on the mission to all peoples in Luke-Acts, see Keener, *Acts*, 1:437–40, 505–11; and now also Marguerat and Steffek, "Naissance."

³³⁴⁹ Luke's concluding sentence is rhetorically acceptable and not an accident (see Hanson, *Acts*, 256).

³³⁵⁰ E.g., Gorgias, *Hel.* 20; *Rhet. Alex.* 20, 1433b.30–31; 22, 1434b.15–17; 37, 1445b.21–23; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Thuc.* 55; *Demosth.* 32; Cicero, *Quinct.* 28.85–29.90; Hermogenes, *Method* 12.427.

³³⁵¹ E.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 5.32.95–96; Musonius Rufus 3, p. 42.23–29; 6, pp. 54.26–56.11 (esp. 56.7–11).

³³⁵² E.g., Polybius 2.71.7–10; 39.8.3–6. Luke includes internal summaries (e.g., Acts 2:41–47; 6:7).

³³⁵³ Marguerat, "Enigma of Closing," 304. For a survey of the history of research on 28:16–31, see Puskas, *Conclusion*, 1–32.

Jewish accusations or unbelief, and Paul's fidelity to his heritage.³³⁵⁴ He likewise recapitulates some of his other themes, such as the gentile mission, the importance of continuing evangelism, openness to Rome, the obduracy of God's own people, and that nothing can stop the gospel when God's servants obey him.

The themes appear especially evident in parallels with the introduction and conclusion of Luke's Gospel (Luke 1–3; 23–24); the programmatic section of the Gospel (4:16–30); and the introduction to Acts (Acts 1).³³⁵⁵ Acts 1, like Acts 28, includes teaching (Acts 1:1; 28:31); the Spirit (1:2, 8; 28:25); four of Acts' eight uses of *kingdom* (1:3, 6; 28:23, 31); witness (1:8; 28:23); and mission to all peoples (1:8; 28:28).³³⁵⁶

Certainly Acts 28:17–31 provides a fitting climax to Luke's work, and in a sense it interprets Paul's "passion" in light of that of Jesus. This both vindicates the Pauline mission and reinforces Jesus's warning that those who want to follow him must share his cross as well as the resurrection hope (Luke 9:23). Jesus's model in the Gospel and especially his commission in Luke 24 and Acts 1 determine the direction of Acts' narrative.

Jerusalem geographically frames Luke's Gospel, whereas the second volume moves from Jerusalem to Rome. The mission that begins with Jerusalem is recapitulated in Rome, as in many earlier cities, by starting with the Jewish people. Luke ends with Paul carrying on the mission, anticipating also the further gentile mission (28:28). The work thus ends by opening from Paul's mission into the continuing mission of the church, empowered by the same Spirit as from the beginning (2:38–39). ****

Since two soldiers normally guarded each prisoner,³³⁵⁷ the assignment of a single guard³³⁵⁸ (per shift) confirms that the official saw little threat in this older Roman citizen from the east. Yet Luke can no longer claim that Paul's guard is a centurion (cf. 24:23; 27:1); Paul's Roman citizenship is anything but unusual, hence carries limited status, in Rome.³³⁵⁹ Nor is Paul free from chains, the lightest form of custody (28:20).³³⁶⁰

³³⁵⁴ Cf. Puskas, *Conclusion*, 66–73.

³³⁵⁵ See extensively Puskas, *Conclusion*, 96–103.

³³⁵⁶ Puskas, *Conclusion*, 82–86; Parsons, *Departure*, 156–58.

³³⁵⁷ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 224.

³³⁵⁸ Correspondingly, note the single "chain" of 28:20 (versus "chains" in 21:33; 26:29).

³³⁵⁹ Rapske, *Custody*, 180–81.

³³⁶⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 171. Military custody often involved being manacled to guards, as here (Rapske, "Prison," 828), even for house arrest (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.237).

A Closer Look: Rome's Elite Guard

In rhetorical hyperbole, Rome had conquered the world (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Anc. Or.* 1.3). Pliny the Elder boasts, “there has been no city in the whole world that could be compared to Rome in magnitude.”³³⁶¹ Until London reached a million in the eighteenth century, no western city grew as large as Rome.³³⁶² Some contend that Rome's population in Paul's day was less than a million;³³⁶³ ancient census figures used for the grain dole suggest, however, with most scholars, that a million is the right approximate order of magnitude.³³⁶⁴

By Paul's day the Praetorian Guard consisted of twelve cohorts, with five hundred to a thousand soldiers each. They maintained order for Italy as the legions did in the provinces, though Rome also had an urban police force under the consular *praefectus urbi*. Praetorians were the elite of the Roman military: they served sixteen years (versus a legionary's twenty), were paid 2 denarii a day (versus a legionary's ten asses), and received 5,000 denarii on discharge (versus 3,000 for a legionary).³³⁶⁵ Paul's own correspondence might reveal his interaction with and influence on some Praetorians (Phil 1:13; 4:22).

Luke does not specify the official who *allowed Paul to live by himself* (28:16), i.e., under house arrest, rather than in prison. The later Western text suggests an officer that could mean the Praetorian prefect,³³⁶⁶ who at this time was Afranius Burrus (though he would have delegated such duties

³³⁶¹ Pliny, *Nat.* 3.5.67 (LCL 2:51).

³³⁶² Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 83. For its size, cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 3.5.66.

³³⁶³ See Packer, “Housing,” 82–87. Packer counts those within Rome's walls; the grain dole applied to the metropolitan area (Packer, “Housing,” 89). Long before Paul's era Rome stretched well beyond its walls (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 4.13.4–5).

³³⁶⁴ Cf. Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 83; Stambaugh, *City*, 89; Lintott, *Romans*, 85.

³³⁶⁵ G. H. Stevenson, “The Army and Navy,” pages 218–38 in *The Augustan Empire: 44 B.C.–A.D. 70* (CAH 10; ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934, repr. 1966), 234. The emperor needed to ensure their loyalty.

³³⁶⁶ The Praetorian Guard was in charge of prisoners sent from the provinces; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.57.2; Sherwin-White, *Society*, 108–9; O'Rourke, “Law,” 169; Jeffers, *World*, 170 (in Paul's day, the Praetorians intervened in Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.1); Conzelmann, *Acts*, 224. On the praetorian prefect, see *OCD*³ 1238–39. On the praetorian guard, see J. B. Campbell, “Praetorians,” *BrillPauly* 11:773–75; now most extensively, S. Bingham, *The Praetorian Guard: A History of Rome's Elite Special Forces* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013).

to a lower official); or (if the office already existed) the *princeps castrorum*, head administrator of the *officium* of the Praetorian Guard.³³⁶⁷ ***

Luke does not elaborate on Paul's rented quarters (28:16), except that Paul covered the cost himself (28:30). But Paul's house arrest rather than imprisonment indicates fairly light custody arrangements,³³⁶⁸ with the help of his friends, his location and activity function like a house church (cf. 5:42; 20:20–21). (Historical data probably preclude Luke's specific use of the term "house," however;³³⁶⁹ apartment buildings were the norm in Rome.)³³⁷⁰ Such favorable treatment probably reflects response to the official opinion sent from Caesarea.³³⁷¹

Waiting just *three days* (28:17) to meet with local people demonstrates efficiency (25:1). Paul heads off false accusations and shares good news, starting with his people (28:20–23) here as in other locations. If pressed strictly, being *arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans* (28:17) contradicts Luke's more detailed narrative in 21:27–33 (cf. 24:6), but Luke here reinforces parallels to Jesus's passion (3:13), as in Agabus's summary in 21:11.

A Closer Look: Rome's Jewish Community

Many Jews lived in Rome (Philo, *Embassy* 155–57);³³⁷² although some Jews left under a recent emperor (Acts 18:2), some scholars estimate some twenty to thirty thousand Jews in Rome when Paul arrives.³³⁷³ A number

³³⁶⁷ Sherwin-White, *Society*, 110.

³³⁶⁸ See Rapske, *Custody*, 9, 20–25, 28.

³³⁶⁹ With Rapske, *Custody*, 365–67. Only about 3 percent of Rome's residents lived in a *domus* (Blue, "House Church," 155–56).

³³⁷⁰ See Packer, "Housing," 80–81; Clarke, *Houses*, 26; Stambaugh, *City*, 157, 172–78; Owens, *City*, 156; J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire* (ed. H. T. Rowell; trans. E. O. Lorimer; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 24–30; Wallace-Hadrill, "Domus," 7–10.

³³⁷¹ Governors normally decided the form of custody based on both the charge and the prisoner's status (Tajra, *Trial*, 180, citing *Dig.* 48.3.1). Caesarea could send another copy of Agrippa's opinion (26:32) if the original document perished in the shipwreck; but Julius could convey his oral instructions in the meantime.

³³⁷² On Roman Judaism, see further Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 167–93; Leon, *Jews of Rome*; Nanos, *Mystery*, 42–75; T. Ilan, "The Torah of the Jews of Ancient Rome," *JSQ* 16 (4, 2009): 363–95; on the synagogues, on burial places, see, e.g., *CIJ* 1:1vi–lxii; Pitigliani, "Catacombs"; Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 54–55. For the Jewish community in Ostia, see, e.g., *CIJ* 1:393, §533.

³³⁷³ Twenty thousand in R. Brändle and E. W. Stegemann, "The Formation of the First 'Christian Congregations' in Rome in the Context of the Jewish Congregations," pages 117–27 in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P.

of Jews in Rome were Roman citizens descended from Jewish slaves freed there (see discussion at Acts 6:9).

Paul meets with many leaders here (28:17).³³⁷⁴ Each synagogue³³⁷⁵ apparently had its own leadership, since Rome did not allow its Jewish community the same level of unity permitted Jews in Alexandria. Many Jewish gatherings may have met in homes;³³⁷⁶ more sizeable synagogues could be named for their patrons, or for other features such as their founders' cities.³³⁷⁷

Most Jewish residents lived in Transtiberinum (modern Trastevere), i.e., across the Tiber from Rome's center (Philo, *Embassy* 155), mostly in cramped buildings and neighborhoods.³³⁷⁸ Many probably worked on the Tiber's docks. Simplifying communication for Paul, most continued to speak Greek rather than Latin,³³⁷⁹ although many had Latin names. ****

Given that Paul is chained to a guard (28:20), his innocence is a matter that he must address up front. Paul's claim that Rome was willing to release him (28:18; cf. 25:9–10, 25; 26:32) until Jerusalemite leaders objected (28:19) summarizes the earlier narrative's tendency from an apologetic perspective. The description illustrates that Luke's focus is more on the larger picture of Paul's innocence than on narrating all details. It also provides an echo of the passion narrative, where Pilate desired to release Jesus (Luke 23:15–18; Acts 3:13). There was no "cause" for putting either Jesus or Paul to death (Acts 13:28; 26:31). Paul speaking of "the Jews" (here, Judeans) to

Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 120; thirty thousand in J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan* (323 BCE–117 CE) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 295. Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 135–36, estimated forty to fifty thousand.

³³⁷⁴ On the synagogue leaders, see Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 185–92.

³³⁷⁵ On the synagogues, see Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 135–66; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 182–85.

³³⁷⁶ M. D. Nanos, "To the Churches within the Synagogues of Rome," pages 11–28 in *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans* (ed. J. L. Sumney; SBLRBS 73; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2012), 15; cf. L. M. White, "Synagogue and Society in Imperial Ostia: Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence," pages 30–68 in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 43–46, 49–50.

³³⁷⁷ P. Richardson, "Augustan-Era Synagogues in Rome," pages 17–29 in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 19–28.

³³⁷⁸ J. S. Jeffers, "Jewish and Christian Families in First-Century Rome," pages 128–50 in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 131.

³³⁷⁹ Leon, *Jews of Rome*, 75–77; D. Noy, "Writing in Tongues: The Use of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew in Jewish Inscriptions from Roman Italy," *JJS* 48 (2, 1997): 300–11. For Greek inscriptions, see *CIJ* 1:6–143; for Latin, *CIJ* 1:143–97.

other Jews might sound strange to us, but Paul and other Jews in Acts do this elsewhere (21:11, 20; 23:20; 26:3–4, 7, 21), as do various Jewish sources.³³⁸⁰ It sometimes designates a specific group rather than the people as a whole (e.g., 23:12–13).

Because the real basis for holding Paul was Judean politics, Paul appealed to Caesar (25:11) to escape the political situation and get a fair trial. That he was *compelled* to appeal to Caesar (28:19) is an argument from necessity,³³⁸¹ hence an argument that his appeal should not be held against him. *Objected* (28:19) insinuates his accusers' malice,³³⁸² since refuting a charge often implied that one's accuser was a slanderer.³³⁸³ Still, one should discredit respected adversaries only gently,³³⁸⁴ and ideally be able to note that one was forced to speak against one's inclination.³³⁸⁵ His purpose is not to bring a countersuit or countercharges (a conventional practice),³³⁸⁶ nor to bring Jerusalem's internal "dirty laundry" before the world (cf. 2 Macc 4:5).³³⁸⁷ If debates over Jesus's identity had led to political repercussions for Jews in Rome in 49 CE (see comment on 18:2), this reassurance may be particularly welcome. Paul's *hope* for his people (28:20) presupposes his Israel-confident eschatology (26:6–7; cf. Rom 9:4–5; 11:26–29), including especially the Judean resurrection belief for which he was opposed (Acts 23:6; 24:15).

Rome's strategic Jewish community maintained connections with their mother city.³³⁸⁸ The lack of complaints (28:21) fits Paul's early spring arrival (28:11). It also reminds us that not everyone was as familiar with

³³⁸⁰ Cf. *CIJ* 1:495, §683, 509, §697; 2:13–14, §746, 158, §972; *CPJ* 1:134–35, §9, 149–50, §18; A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 34–36; J. A. Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 401.

³³⁸¹ See comment on Acts 11:17; cf. also comment on Acts 26:19.

³³⁸² For insinuation, see, e.g., Cicero, *Cat.* 1.6.14; fuller comment at Acts 24:18–19.

³³⁸³ E.g., Cicero, *Mur.* 6.13; *Jn* 8:44; see further comment on Acts 24:18.

³³⁸⁴ *Rhet. Alex.* 37.1445b.17–19; for relatives, cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lysias* 24.

³³⁸⁵ Aeschines, *Tim.* 1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Isaeus* 10, 11.

³³⁸⁶ See comment on 24:19; if all prosecution witnesses belonged to one people, one might impugn their credibility by dismissing the credibility of that entire race (Cicero, *Flacc.* 4.9–10; 5.11–9.20). He allays his hearers' concerns that he might countersue (Rapske, *Custody*, 189, noting *Dig.* 48.1.5).

³³⁸⁷ Given Roman anti-Judaism, instances where a Jewish court had sentenced someone for an offense not punishable under Roman law were particularly problematic (Safrai, "Government," 408).

³³⁸⁸ See Dunn, *Romans*, xlvii–xlviii; cf. 2 Macc 1:1, 10, 18; *Sipre Deut.* 43.3.7. For Jerusalem as mother-city, see, e.g., Philo, *Flacc.* 46; *Embassy* 203, 281, 294, 334; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.160; *War* 2.400, 421, 517, 626; 4.181, 228, 234; 4 Ezra 10:7, 25; 2 Bar 3:1–3.

Paul as his significance in Luke's narrative could suggest. That Paul faced more prior prejudice in Jerusalem (21:21) than in Rome contributes to Acts' upbeat open ending.³³⁸⁹

Although Paul does not speak against his own people, they spoke against (*antilegô*) him (28:19), and his movement is *spoken against* (*antilegô*, 28:22). Given apparent earlier conflicts over Jesus's messiahship and Claudius's harsh intervention (see comment on 18:2), Roman synagogues had probably had minimal contact with the growing Christian movement for over a decade;³³⁹⁰ certainly by 64 CE Rome distinguished Christians from other Jews (cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). Yet at least some Roman Christians (2:10; cf. Rom 16:3–5, 7, 11) were Jewish, and some contact is likely. The synagogue leaders probably know about the Christian movement primarily from hearsay because they do not have a fellow educated Jewish leader, a member of their own class, from whom they can inquire about the movement properly.

28:23–28: RECALCITRANCE PROPHESED

Paul's explanation of *this sect* (28:22) involves God's *kingdom* and *Jesus* (28:23). His "involuntary" house-church ministry in Rome may have further expanded the Roman church before Nero's persecution (cf. *great numbers* already in 28:23). A divided audience (28:24) is common in Acts, and is by no means a specifically Jewish problem (17:4–5, 12; 19:9; cf. 13:43; 17:32; 23:7).

Whereas Paul has no charge against his people before Rome (28:19), he charges some of them before God in 28:25–28. All Israel should embrace its king, so when Paul finds Rome's Jewish leaders divided (28:24), he appeals to Scripture to explain the unbelief of some (28:25–27; cf. 13:40–41). Paul, once blind (Acts 9:8), now notes that others remain blind, continuing a centuries-old pattern of recalcitrance among God's people.³³⁹¹ This recalcitrance, which pervades both volumes, justifies the continuing offer of Israel's hope to the gentiles (28:28).

³³⁸⁹ Against Greek tragic conventions, biblical historiography preferred upbeat endings (e.g., the Joseph story; Esther; even 2 Kings); cf. esp. 2 Macc 15:35–37, highlighting Judas's triumph rather than his subsequent defeat (Foakes-Jackson, *Acts*, 236).

³³⁹⁰ Rutgers, "Policy," 106; Brändle and Stegemann, "Formation," 126; Das, *Paul and Jews*, 59.

³³⁹¹ Christian history has displayed the same disappointing patterns as Israel's history did, suggesting that resistance to God is endemic to human nature.

Unlike Mark, Luke does not offer the full text of this Isaiah passage in his parables section (Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). Isaiah 6 (and the first and last of Jesus's four soils, Luke 8:11–15) become a hermeneutical key not only for Jesus's parables but also for evaluating the obduracy of God's people throughout his narrative. The rejection of Paul's message coheres with the larger rejection of Jesus's message, and that, in turn, with Israel's larger story (Isa 6:9–10; cf. 53:1–3). Some probably rejected the message's Jewishness because so many Jews had rejected it (cf. Rom 3:3; 11:28); but Luke contends that this rejection itself fulfills Scriptures (cf. Isa 53:1 in Rom 10:16),³³⁹² including its pattern in history (Luke 6:26; 11:48; Acts 7:9, 35–39, 51–53; 28:25–27).

Luke reproduces Isaiah's emphatic chiasm of body parts (with synonymous semantic force):³³⁹³

- A *Heart has grown dull*
- B *Ears are hard of hearing*
- C *Shut their eyes*
- C' *Not look with their eyes*
- B' *Listen with their ears*
- A' *Understand with their heart*

Paul's mission was called to *turn* people³³⁹⁴ and open *their eyes* (see 26:18).³³⁹⁵ Physical healings in Luke-Acts prefigure eschatological restoration (cf. Luke 11:20; Isa 35:5–6 in Luke 7:22), so that Luke understands *heal* here in the holistic sense found in the prophets.³³⁹⁶

Against some, however, Luke's vision of Israel's ultimate future is more positive (cf. 28:20). Already twice in Acts Paul warns his own people, in stronger terms than here (28:28), that he is "turning to the Gentiles" (13:46; 18:6; 28:28), but each time (except the last, because the book ends there) he

³³⁹² Paul's explicit mentions of Isaiah are in Romans (Rom 9:27, 29; 10:16, 20; 15:12); perhaps believers in Rome circulated an Isaiah scroll. But Luke prefers Isaiah in his programmatic passages (except Acts 2:17–21) anyway (cf. Pao, *New Exodus*).

³³⁹³ Gentiles also recognized the figurative moralistic use of body parts; see, e.g., Thucydides 3.38.7; *Rhet. Her.* 4.49.62; Cicero, *Vat.* 2.4; Livy 3.71.5; Seneca, *Ep. Lucil.* 20.2; 40.4; Pliny, *Nat.* 18.1.4; Plutarch, *Statecraft* 5, *Mor.* 802DE; cf. Rom 3:13–18.

³³⁹⁴ Cf. Luke's usage in 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; for Israel, 3:19; Luke 1:16–17.

³³⁹⁵ Cf. eyes and ears in 7:51; Luke 2:30; 8:8; 9:44; 10:23; 14:35; 19:42; 24:16, 31.

³³⁹⁶ Figurative in Isa 53:5; 57:18; Jer 3:22; 17:14; 33:6; Hos 11:3; 14:4; physically (and eschatologically) in Isa 29:18; 32:3–4; 35:5–6.

goes to his own people in other cities (14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4; 19:8; 28:17).³³⁹⁷ This simply follows and reinforces the pattern of Jesus's command to his agents: when people in one city reject them, they must shake off the dust and move on (Luke 10:10–11).

Luke's point is not rejecting Israel, but (clear in Acts 28:28) welcoming gentiles. In Luke-Acts, the final speaking lines of both Jesus (on earth) and Paul address worldwide mission (1:8; 28:28).³³⁹⁸ *Salvation of God* (28:28) evokes Isaiah's promises regarding gentiles, since Luke's other clear reference is his paraphrase of Isa 40:5 LXX in Luke 3:6.³³⁹⁹ *This salvation sent* to the gentiles was first "sent" to Israel (Acts 13:26; cf. 3:26); *they will listen* (28:28) contrasts with Israel's failure to *listen* (28:27).

A Closer Look: Rejecting Israel?

The rejection here can be no more absolute than any other in Acts, especially in view of some believers here. Earlier biblical prophets affirmed a remnant (as here) while denouncing those who rejected their message.³⁴⁰⁰

Against many interpreters, Israel's obduracy does not entail their final rejection. A "redemption" (Luke 21:28) that includes Israel (1:68; 2:38; Acts 1:6–7; 3:19–21) follows the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). Like Paul (Rom 11:11–12, 15, 25–26), Luke may believe that Jewish disobedience providentially delays the promises' consummation, so allowing time to evangelize gentiles (cf. Acts 1:6–8; 3:19–21).³⁴⁰¹ The threat to turn to the gentiles might also fit a rhetorical function of provoking his people to "jealousy" by not taking their privilege for granted (Rom 11:14).³⁴⁰²

Paul turned to gentiles in even stronger language in 13:46 and 18:6; rather than 28:28 signifying a more decisive rejection of Israel, it suggests a

³³⁹⁷ With, e.g., H. E. Dollar, *A Biblical-Missiological Exploration of the Cross-Cultural Dimensions in Luke-Acts* (San Francisco: Mellen, 1993), 320–21; Barrett, *Acts*, 657; Soards, *Speeches*, 206.

³³⁹⁸ Puskas, *Conclusion*, 84; cf. Kilgallen, "Acts 28,28." The exalted Lord's last quoted statements also send Paul to gentiles (22:21; 26:17–18) and to Rome (23:11), and Peter's final speech defends the circumcision-free gentile mission (15:7–11).

³³⁹⁹ Not in the MT, but cf. God's salvation in Isa 25:9; 46:13; 49:6; 51:5–6, 8; 56:1.

³⁴⁰⁰ For judgment against Israel, see, e.g., Isa 2:1–3:26; Jer 5:9, 29; 9:9; 15:1–9; Amos 2:6; 3:2; 5:5; 7:8–9; 9:4; Mic 1:6–16; for the righteous minority idea, see, e.g., Ezek 9:4–6; Mal 3:16–17; Rom 9:27; 11:5.

³⁴⁰¹ For the compatibility of Rom 11 and Acts 28:16–31, see especially Litwak, "Views."

³⁴⁰² See Lehnert, "Absage"; Litwak, "Views," 240. For the text's use as a reproof inviting conversion, rather than rejection, see van de Sandt, "No Salvation."

paradigmatic, continuing pattern during the gentile era.³⁴⁰³ Paul's Jewish audience here remains divided (28:24–25), as often earlier (13:43–45; 14:1–2; 17:4–5, 10–14; 18:4–8), and Paul continues ministry to “all” visitors, presumably both Jews and gentiles (28:30–31).³⁴⁰⁴

Indeed, Paul's earlier affirmations of his Jewish identity and heritage (21:39; 22:3; 23:6; 24:11–17; 25:8; 26:4–7) climax here (28:17, 20). If, as most scholars argue, Luke writes after Jerusalem's destruction, it is the heritage's meaning and true guardians that remain in dispute. ****

28:30–31: MINISTRY BOLD AND UNHINDERED

Luke's collection of precedents and his positive ending offer hope of Roman toleration, despite past persecutions.³⁴⁰⁵ Luke leads readers to expect Paul's acquittal (26:30–32; 28:16, 21, 30–31), his condemnation (20:25), or, embracing the range of evidence, acquittal this time but a subsequent arrest and condemnation.³⁴⁰⁶ Recounting Paul's departure from Rome would prove anticlimactic, and ending with a negative verdict would not parallel the upbeat ending of Luke's first volume. By concluding with Paul's relative freedom even in custody, Luke shows that Roman law was favorable to Paul's case; Nero's tyranny and repression of the church were legally anomalous, not an appropriate precedent for others in the empire to follow.

A Closer Look: Release or Execution?

Something apparently happened at the end of the *two whole years* (28:30); otherwise, there is little reason for Luke to specify this limit.³⁴⁰⁷ Thus at the

³⁴⁰³ Dunn, *Partings*, 151, citing 13:46–48; 18:6; 22:21; and 26:17–18, and insisting that Acts 28, which quotes Isa 6, can be “no more final indeed than the words of Isa. 6.9–10 were for Isaiah's mission to his people.” A mere remnant cannot exhaust all God's promises to Israel; see R. C. Tannehill, “The Story of Israel within the Lukan Narrative,” pages 325–39 in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy* (ed. D. P. Moessner; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 339.

³⁴⁰⁴ At the very least those persuaded earlier (Dunn, *Partings*, 150–51). The apostle to gentiles confirms that he also served Israel (Rom 11:14; 1 Cor 9:20; 2 Cor 11:24, 26).

³⁴⁰⁵ On Nero's persecution, see, e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.5–7.

³⁴⁰⁶ I incline toward this last position, given church tradition (1 *Clem.* 5.6–7) and the Pastorals' itinerary; but the matter is debated.

³⁴⁰⁷ Except on the early-date view that Luke finished Acts at that time; or on the observation that this was a common period for rental agreements (e.g., *P. Mich.* 9.563.19), fitting this context (D. L. Mealand, “The Close of Acts and Its Hellenistic Greek Vocabulary,” *NTS*

end of two years Paul could have been released, executed, or banished.³⁴⁰⁸ Against some, a two-year limit for cases was not mandatory.³⁴⁰⁹

Wishing to end on a positive note, Luke may conclude Acts before Paul's execution. Still, most foreshadowings of trouble (20:23; 21:11) have already been fulfilled within the narrative; Luke offers no explicit death predictions for Paul as he did for Jesus. Because I believe that Luke writes after Paul's death, I believe that he takes that information for granted; but does his narrative presuppose that conclusion for this occasion of custody?

Conversely, Luke may expect his audience to infer from his account that Paul was released at its end.

1. Paul evangelizes for two years without restriction under the very nose of the Praetorian Guard (28:16, 23, 30–31; cf. Phil 1:13; 4:22).
2. Paul's favorable treatment by Festus, Julius, and those who approved his light custody in Rome suggests his case's positive resolution.
3. Various positive Roman legal precedents (e.g., 18:14–15; 26:31–32) bode well for Paul.³⁴¹⁰
4. Roman authorities recognize (25:10) that Paul's accusers lack proof (24:13; 25:7).
5. At last mention no one has brought charges (28:21). One could not legally try a Roman citizen if no one had come forward to prosecute him (Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.54.141). If accusers failed to finish a case, it would be decided in favor of the defendant.³⁴¹¹
6. Further charges might be unlikely. Granted, Judean priests often won their cases in Rome.³⁴¹² Judean delegations, however, normally involved matters of state (e.g., Josephus, *War* 2.246). Given their failure before two governors and the king in Judea itself, there might

36 (4, 1990): 583–97, here 588–89, 595). It could also evoke earlier ministry in 19:10 or, likelier, his captivity in Caesarea (24:27).

³⁴⁰⁸ On banishment to an island as a frequent penalty, see, e.g., Plutarch, *Exile* 12, *Mor.* 604B; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.34; 6.22.5; Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.3, 53; 3.68–69; Rev 1:9.

³⁴⁰⁹ Pace Ramsay, *Teaching*, 365–66; Cadbury, "Law and Trial," 319–26. See Sherwin-White, *Society*, 108–19; Barrett, *Acts*, 1251–52; Rapske, *Custody*, 322–23; cf. already Abbott, *Acts*, 262.

³⁴¹⁰ See, e.g., E. Bammel, "Jewish Activity against Christians in Palestine according to Acts," pages 357–64 in Bauckham, *Palestinian Setting*, 363.

³⁴¹¹ See comment on 24:19; cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 240–41.

³⁴¹² P. McKechnie, "Paul among the Jews," pages 103–23 in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (ed. M. Harding and A. Nobbs; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 121–22.

seem little point attempting the same case before the emperor, especially given the penalties for frivolous prosecution.³⁴¹³

7. Despite parallels between Luke's volumes, Paul, unlike Jesus, has escaped Judea, and the political incentives to condemn Paul.
8. In view of Festus's letter (25:26–27; 26:31–32), Paul's high-status accusers may not consider Paul's case worth the voyage to Rome, and any lesser representatives would carry accordingly lesser weight.³⁴¹⁴
9. Paul's letters, probably from Roman detention, suggest, independently from Acts, Paul's cautious optimism that he would be released (Phil 1:24–27; 2:24; Phlm 22).
10. Historically, Nero's persecution in Rome cannot be dated before 64 CE, and Luke depicts Paul reaching Rome closer to 60 CE.³⁴¹⁵
11. Subsequent tradition suggests that Paul was released before being rearrested and martyred.³⁴¹⁶

If Luke writes after Paul's martyrdom but suggests his release beforehand, we can account for both suggested trajectories of data in Acts; scholarly arguments for both positions, then, could be correct. If Paul was released, his rearrest is plausible or even probable: hundreds or even thousands of Christians were martyred, and Paul's high visibility (especially given his first arrest) would have made him a particular target.

The apparent reticence of Paul's accusers to address Paul's case after two years (28:30–31) would be significant for Luke's audience: the case of a plaintiff who delayed prosecution could also be questioned for that reason by opposing orators.³⁴¹⁷ Likewise, if those who initiated a charge appear

³⁴¹³ Hemer, *Acts in History*, 157. Even in Judea, some apparently expected failure in court (25:3).

³⁴¹⁴ Some also suggest that the change in high priesthood helps account for why the case was dropped (cf. Riesner, "Pauline Chronology," 22).

³⁴¹⁵ Some think that after 62 pro-Jewish Poppaea Sabina's marriage to Nero would turn him against Christians, but neither Poppaea nor Roman Jews were necessarily anti-Christian (despite Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4). At this point, Nero remained under the influence of Seneca, whose brother Gallio had provided one of the case's favorable precedents (18:14–15); Nero himself still avoided personal involvement with cases (Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.4.2).

³⁴¹⁶ The itinerary in the Pastorals (important to account for, esp. given the itinerary's internal consistency; Keener, *Acts*, 4:3770–71); *Muratorian Canon* lines 35–39; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.1–7; Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 55; probably implied earlier in 1 *Clem.* 5.5–7 (including multiple detentions in 5.6). See further Finegan, *Apostles*, 22–25; Lightfoot, *Acts*, 338–51.

³⁴¹⁷ E.g., Lysias, *Or.* 3.39, §99; Maximus of Tyre 18.6; see comment on Acts 24:21.

reticent to prosecute and test their charge in court, they can be portrayed as having fabricated it.³⁴¹⁸

Granted, Paul's case would hardly warrant priority before the emperor's backlogged court. But Paul's case was not a complicated one to decide if no accusers arrived within a reasonable period of time, and too much delay weakened many sorts of cases.³⁴¹⁹ Careful track would be kept of the location and length of the prisoner's custody; detailed data, including regular updates on the prisoner's status, would be available to the appropriate officials.³⁴²⁰ ****

Hosting visitors (28:17, 23, 30) requires space, but how could a prisoner host many *at his own expense* (28:30)? The vast majority of Rome's population lived in apartments,³⁴²¹ the price, utility, and safety decreasing with altitude.³⁴²² Ground floor apartments were larger and costlier.³⁴²³ Rent in Rome, however, was about four times that in any other part of Italy.³⁴²⁴ A house could cost up to 875,000 denarii; rent for the cheapest (upper-story) apartments (small rooms) might run from 100 to 125 denarii (400–500 sesterces) annually.³⁴²⁵ The average person may have earned 200 denarii per year.³⁴²⁶

Roman regulations normally prohibited prisoners from working a trade (18:3) or using sharp tools, and Paul's profession would prove difficult while chained to a soldier.³⁴²⁷ If *his own expense* simply means that Rome did not bear the cost, possibly others contributed; some of Paul's companions probably earned money.³⁴²⁸ His freedom to have visitors (28:30; as in 24:23; 28:17–28) fits Paul's letters (Phil 2:19, 25, 30; 4:18; Col 4:7–14).

³⁴¹⁸ See *Rhet. Alex.* 29, 1437a.18–21.

³⁴¹⁹ Cf. Lysias, *Or.* 7.17, §109; Aeschines, *Tim.* 39; Hermogenes, *Issues* 44.10–12; Pliny, *Ep.* 10.31.3; 10.33.2; 10.96; 10.110–111; Metzger, *Outline*, 50; cf. Rapske, *Custody*, 326–28.

³⁴²⁰ Rapske, *Custody*, 250 (noting prison records such as *P.Oxy.* 43.3104).

³⁴²¹ See Packer, "Housing," 80–81; Clarke, *Houses*, 26; Stambaugh, *City*, 157, 172–78; Owens, *City*, 156; Carcopino, *Life*, 24–30; Wallace-Hadrill, "*Domus*," 7–10.

³⁴²² See, e.g., Carcopino, *Life*, 24–26, 29–32; Stambaugh, *City*, 157, 172–73.

³⁴²³ Stambaugh, *City*, 157; Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses*, 141, 183; Owens, *City*, 156.

³⁴²⁴ Rapske, *Custody*, 234. Food would be less problematic since Paul as a citizen qualified for the grain dole (239–42).

³⁴²⁵ Stambaugh, *City*, 154. Blue, "House Church," 156, estimates that most upper-story apartments went for 2,000 sesterces a year, requiring most tenants to sublet.

³⁴²⁶ Stambaugh, *City*, 356 n. 41.

³⁴²⁷ Rapske, *Custody*, 324–26.

³⁴²⁸ Physicians, for example (Col 4:14), were much in demand; cf., e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 77/78.8; Goodman, *State*, 60.

Paul's ministry in custody repeats various Lukan emphases, such as hospitality. *Kingdom* appears eight times in Acts and over forty times in the Gospel;³⁴²⁹ it brackets some of Jesus's final message (Acts 1:3, 6) and Paul's final message (28:23, 31), and thereby brackets most of Acts.³⁴³⁰ Ironically, Rome's prisoner proclaims the kingdom of an executed "Lord" (28:31).³⁴³¹ Paul here speaks with *boldness* (as in 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26), just like the Jerusalem apostles (2:29; 4:13, 29, 31).³⁴³²

That large numbers of visitors (28:17, 23) had ready access to Paul suggests not that each of his individual guards proved favorable, but that they had orders to allow it; "unhindered" (28:31) is a significant legal term (cf. here 24:23).³⁴³³ It shows Roman toleration, and Luke concludes on this note rather than Paul's martyrdom in part to invite Rome to continue this policy of relative religious freedom.³⁴³⁴

Yet Luke's closing words (*without hindrance*; Greek *akôlutôs*) are significant for additional reasons. Luke has already emphasized that nothing can hinder (using the cognate verb *kôluô*) God's surprising work among the gentiles (8:36; 10:47; 11:17) – whether the prejudices of the church (Acts 10:47; 11:17; cf. Luke 9:49–50; 18:16); the hostility of other religious teachers (Luke 11:52); or the power of Rome. The kingdom is God's doing, and whatever the obstacles and apparent setbacks along the way, God steadily advances it.³⁴³⁵ Beyond Acts' open ending, the good news will reach the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Paul's custody does not prevent his ministry; it redirects it to different and otherwise inaccessible venues.³⁴³⁶ Such barriers could not stop the gospel.³⁴³⁷ Gamaliel's supposition in 5:39 is confirmed: if the movement is

³⁴²⁹ For "proclaiming" (usually one of two verbs) the "kingdom," see with the present verb (*kêrussô*) Luke 8:1; 9:2; Acts 8:12; 20:25; with *euaggelizô*, see Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 8:12. *Kêrussô* appears with *euaggelizô* in Luke 8:1, and *euaggelizô* with *didaskô* ("teach") in Luke 20:1; Acts 5:42; 15:35.

³⁴³⁰ For *inclusio*, see, e.g., Catullus 52.1, 4; 57.1, 10; Plutarch, *Demosth.* 26.4; 28.5; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.16.1, 13; Ps 8:1, 9; Matt 19:30; 20:16; Luke 15:24, 32; 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1; Rev 1:4, 8; in narratives, see Hermogenes, *Inv.* 4.8.195.

³⁴³¹ See Cassidy, "Proclamation."

³⁴³² Although chains were normally a matter of shame, Paul did historically display *parrêsia* (boldness) despite them (Eph 6:19–20; Phil 1:20; 1 Thess 2:2).

³⁴³³ Rapske, *Custody*, 276; Mealand, "Close and Vocabulary."

³⁴³⁴ Haenchen, *Acts*, 726, 732.

³⁴³⁵ With, e.g., Stagg, *Acts*, 266; R. Williams, *Acts*, 170; the very title of Troftgruben, *Conclusion*.

³⁴³⁶ Skinner, *Locating Paul*, 187, 194–95.

³⁴³⁷ Skinner, *Locating Paul*, 200.

of God, nothing can stop it, for as Paul the persecutor learned, one cannot fight against God (26:14). Even through the very forms of suffering that appear to destroy the gospel – such as Jesus’s crucifixion or Paul’s imprisonment – the living God is at work to accomplish his purposes.

Bridging Horizons: What Became of Luke’s Gentile Mission?

Subsequent history may allow us to highlight the failings of Christians more than Luke chose to do; the terrible legacy of Christian anti-Semitism also deeply marred Luke’s (and Paul’s) hopes for Christian witness to the Jewish people for much of at least eighteen of the past twenty centuries. But subsequent history also suggests that Luke’s central insight about the gentile mission’s success was remarkably prescient.

In his world, when Christians remained a small sect in a sea of polytheism, Luke had faith that the divine leaven of Jesus’s kingdom message would spread rather than be stamped out. He was convinced that centralizing the gospel in one culture or location, even in Jerusalem, was not the way of the future (a conviction reinforced by Jerusalem’s fall); instead, the worldwide, multiethnic mission advocated by Paul was. Nearly two millennia later, Jesus is known and revered (in different ways) by the two largest world religions, and his followers exist in almost every nation and culture.

Luke might grieve over much of what he would see in much of modern Christendom – certainly, for example, the materialism and consumerism of many Christians in the West (cf. 2:44–45; 4:32–35; Luke 12:33; 14:33). He would undoubtedly express surprise that the parousia (the “delay” of which he already recognized, Acts 1:6–8) had been delayed for so long. But he would surely regard the global, multicultural fellowship of Jesus’s movement as a dramatic confirmation of Paul’s calling and mission – a calling and mission that, at a deeper level, stemmed from Jesus’s command and depended on the leading and power of God’s own Spirit. He might well ask why Christians have not shared their lives and resources even more fully for the objective of that mission. ****

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